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Legislative Audit Division

State of Montana

Report to the Legislature

December 1999

Performance Audit

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Block Management Program

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

This performance audit contains 14 recommendations for improvement of the Block Management Program. Recommendations include:

- **Developing goals and objectives to measure program success or outcomes.**
- **Coordinating with other programs addressing access.**
- **Re-evaluating the base payment system used to compensate landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program.**

Direct comments/inquiries to:
Legislative Audit Division
Room 135, State Capitol
PO Box 201705
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Members of the performance audit staff hold degrees in disciplines appropriate to the audit process. Areas of expertise include business and public administration, statistics, economics, computer science, and engineering.

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John W. Northey, Legal Counsel
Tori Hunthausen, IT & Operations Manager

Deputy Legislative Auditors:
Jim Pellegrini, Performance Audit
James Gillett, Financial-Compliance Audit

December 1999

The Legislative Audit Committee
of the Montana State Legislature

This is our performance audit of the Block Management Program administered by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

This report provides information to the legislature concerning the history of the program and recommendations for increasing efficiency and effectiveness. Overall it appears the enhanced Block Management Program has opened some previously closed land to free public hunting. Responses from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks are contained at the end of the report.

We wish to express our appreciation to the department staff for their cooperation and assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Seacat
Legislative Auditor

Room 135, State Capitol Building, PO Box 201705 Helena MT 59620-1705
Phone (406) 444-3122 FAX (406) 444-9784 E-Mail lad@state.mt.us

Legislative Audit Division

Performance Audit

Block Management Program

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

The member of the audit staff involved in this audit were Mary Zednick.

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Appointed and Administrative Officials

Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission	Stan Meyer, Chairman (Great Falls) Dave Simpson, Vice Chairman (Hardin) Darlyne Dascher (Fort Peck) Charles Decker (Libby) Tim Mulligan (Whitehall)
Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks	Pat Graham, Director Rich Clough, Chief of Operations Chris Smith, Chief of Staff Paul Sihler, Administrator, Field Services Division

Introduction

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) formally started the Block Management Program in 1985. Prior to 1985 a number of landowners expressed concerns about the number of hunters on their land, damage to the land, and the time it took the landowner to deal with hunters. Landowners were threatening to close their land to all public hunting. In response, the department created the Block Management Program. The intent of the program was to help landowners control hunters on their land. The program was enhanced by the 1995 Legislature to provide tangible benefits to landowners to encourage public access to their land. Funding is provided from outfitter-sponsored non-resident deer or elk combination big game licenses.

Expenditures

Block Management Program expenditures include department operating expenses and payments to landowners enrolled in the program. Payments to landowners in fiscal years 1996-97 through 1998-99 were: $2,757,103, $2,571,381, and $2,541,936. Department operating expenditures averaged $532,000 for the three years.

Enhanced Program Created

In 1995 the legislature passed House Bill 195 (sections 87-1-265 through 269, MCA) which created two landowner incentive programs. The Hunter Management Program (section 87-1-266, MCA) allows the department to provide sportsman licenses to resident landowners and combination licenses to non-resident landowners. The Hunter Access Enhancement Program (section 87-1-267, MCA) compensates landowners for impacts to their land by hunters or for providing access through their land to adjacent public land. Land restricted by outfitting or commercial hunting is not eligible for the program. Factors used in determining benefits to landowners include but are not limited to:

- The number of days of public hunting provided by a participating landowner;
- Wildlife habitat provided;
- Resident wildlife game populations;

- Number, sex, and species of animals taken; and
- Access provided to adjacent public lands.

The Hunter Access Enhancement Program compensates landowners as follows:

- Basic enrollment payment - available to landowners who enroll land in the program, paid annually for enrollment or renewal.
- Base impact payment - available to any landowner who enrolls land in the program. Paid annually for enrollment or renewal. Compensation is set at $6.00 per hunter day. A hunter day is defined as one hunter who hunts on the property during a calendar day.
- Length of season impact payment - available, in addition to other impact payments, to any enrollee who places no restrictions on the legal fall seasons for any species available in huntable numbers. Compensation is computed at $2.00 per hunter day.
- Species/gender impact payments - available, in addition to other impact payments, to any enrollee who places no restrictions on gender/species available in huntable numbers. Compensation is computed at $2.00 per hunter day.

If the landowner provides access to isolated state/federal lands, with no enrollment of deeded land with public hunting access, compensation is computed at one-half the base impact payment rate. If no restrictions are placed on season length, landowners also receive one-half the length of season impact payment per hunter day or a total of $4.00 per hunter.

A maximum of $8,000 a year can be paid to a landowner.

For the 1998 hunting season, 917 landowners enrolled 7,275,721 acres in the program.

Amount of Private Land Open to Public Hunting

Using available information created by the department we compared the number of acres in block management to the number of privately owned acres open to public hunting. Information was only available for mule deer hunting. We determined about 24 percent of private land open to public hunting for mule deer is enrolled in the Block Management Program.

Was Land Opened with the Enhanced Program?

Based on our surveys sent to landowners enrolled in the program and landowners who would like to enroll in the program, the current Block Management Program opened some land for free public hunting. Some land now open to free public hunting was not open at all to hunting, and other land was only open to limited hunting. Survey results showed 80 percent of the respondents' land was open to public hunting prior to the landowner enrolling in the program.

Measuring Program Success

We asked staff what they considered the program's goal and how they measure program success. The general consensus was the goal is to enhance public hunter access and improve landowner/sportsperson/department relationships. No one had any consistent outcomes or formal criteria they used to measure program success. Staff have not established specific criteria to measure program success or outcomes. *The department should create specific objectives that relate to the purpose and mission of the program, establish measurable criteria which relate directly to the goals and objectives, and develop strategies to allow for attaining desired results or outcomes.*

Coordination with Other Programs Addressing Access Needed

The Wildlife Division administers two programs which address public access to private lands for hunting purposes - the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program (UGBP) and Habitat Montana. Department staff do not monitor hunter use on conservation easements or the UGBP projects. Staff thought all but two or so landowners with conservation easements are in the Block Management Program. They also indicated they thought most UGBP projects were in block management so they relied on block management to monitor hunting for both programs. However, we found only about half of the easements and 10 percent of UGBP projects are enrolled in block management. *The department should develop methods to coordinate the access provided under the Block*

Management Program, the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program and Habitat Montana, and monitor the hunting on conservation easements and the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program projects.

Currently, hunters cannot readily find a conservation easement or an UGBP project to hunt because neither is publicly "advertised". *The department should publicize conservation easements and the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program projects.*

Access Coordination Needed

The Private Land/Public Wildlife Council is charged with addressing access. With three internal programs in two divisions addressing access, and an external council reviewing and making recommendations pertaining to access, the department should consider establishing an access coordination function. *This function could ensure the three programs coordinate to ensure land open to free public hunting is publicized, hunting is monitored, and the recommendations from the council are incorporated into department operations.*

Landowner Compensation

We examined the current compensation system and found the system is based on the number of hunter days occurring during the hunting season and does not differentiate compensation for actual or potential impacts to the land or landowner. The current payment system structure also does not recognize landowners' attempts to control the number of hunters on the land to potentially increase the "quality" of the hunt. *While the current system provided a basis to establish the program, we believe the compensation system should be re-evaluated.*

Forms of Compensation Other Than Money

At the current time, the program is not growing due to lack of resources and money to compensate landowners. Many field staff and responses to our surveys indicated landowners would be willing to accept some form of benefit other than money to enter into the program. Suggestions included gates or fences, weed control, tags/permits from special drawings, or a menu of hunting licenses instead of just a sportsman license. *Department officials should explore options for the Block Management Program to provide*

benefits to landowners other than money and a single resident sportsman license or non-resident big game combination license.

Longer Term Contracts

Under the current annual contract the department does not know from one year to the next how much it is going to have to pay landowners. This makes budgeting difficult. *The department should develop a system where contracts can be established for terms of more than one year.*

Compensation for Landowners in Aggregate Block Management Areas

Landowners in aggregate (multi-landowner) Block Management Areas (BMAs) are not compensated in the same way as those in single BMAs. Every landowner in an aggregate BMA receives the basic enrollment fee of $250 but the impact payments do not reflect actual hunter days. Landowners in aggregate BMAs must divide the number of hunter days among all the landowners. Aggregate BMAs help the department manage hunters, wildlife and habitat. Survey results showed the majority of respondents wanted a compensation system that encourages landowners to enroll in an aggregate BMA. *The department should develop a compensation system that rewards landowners for enrolling in an aggregate Block Management Area.*

Documentation of Enrollment and Re-enrollment of Landowners

When the program enlarged in 1996, the first landowners enrolled were ones already in the program. In 1998, a department committee developed a regional enrollment process and criteria. Some regions developed forms for the 1998 enrollment and re-enrollment which followed enrollment criteria developed by the department committee. However, only one region actually used the forms to determine who should be re-enrolled or if they should be enrolled for the first time. Other regions did not use either the re-enrollment or new enrollment forms. Currently, the enrollment and re-enrollment process does not ensure participation criteria is followed due to lack of documentation for the process followed in most regions. *We recommend the department ensure Block Management Coordinators justify and document the enrollment of new landowners or the re-enrollment of current landowners in the Block Management Program.*

Program Accountability

Due to concerns about landowners issuing permission slips to hunters for multiple days when they only hunted one day, family members counted as a hunter day on the family ranch, etc., the department created policies to make the program more accountable. Each region created the forms and process it would use to meet policy requirements. As a result, the process is fairly standard and regions are consistent in their use of surveys. The policies and procedures followed provide program accountability.

Outfitting on BMAs

Statute does not allow land for inclusion in the program if outfitting or commercial hunting restricts public hunting opportunities. Rules state outfitting may not take place on a BMA unless public recreation and hunting opportunities are not restricted and the landowner and regional supervisor approve the activity. We reviewed department and Board of Outfitters and Guides information to determine how many BMAs have outfitters use them, how much the BMAs were used, and if the outfitters had permission to use the land. From the information available, it appears outfitting on BMAs is following block management statute and rules.

Communication with Landowners and Hunters

Communication is an integral way for the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to promote landowner/sportsperson relations. One of the major means of communicating with landowners and hunters are the regional tabloids and individual BMA maps. We reviewed tabloids and maps to determine how easy both publications would be to read and understand. We found maps and tabloids tend to be confusing and difficult to read. In most cases, the information was confusing and there is little consistency in presenting it among regions. *We recommend the department/regions initiate a process to review tabloid and map information to make information more consistent/standard and easier to understand.*

Locating BMAs

In cases where no permission is required to hunt a BMA, or permission is granted by the landowner someplace on the BMA, maps provided by the regions are the only means a hunter has to find the BMA. We used some of the maps received from the regions to try to locate BMAs. We could not find one BMA, some were not signed properly, and some maps were not correct. *We recommend*

the department ensure the directions on the Block Management Area maps can be followed and the areas are properly signed prior to the hunting season.

Landowner and Hunter Knowledge of the Program

We sent questionnaires to hunters and to landowners who have not expressed an interest in the program. We found some hunters and landowners did not know about the program. Hunters also had problems with the availability of tabloids and maps. The department does not have a process to easily inform the public, hunters or landowners about the program. There is no general information about the program at license dealers or other public places that deal with hunters and landowners. *We recommend the department help promote landowner/sporstmen partnerships by developing a process to easily and broadly explain the Block Management Program and how it works in each region.*

Role of Staff in the Program

We reviewed the roles of field staff, particularly coordinators, wardens and biologists in the Block Management Program. The role of biologists and wardens varies by region. In some regions biologists and wardens negotiate block management contracts with landowners in their area of responsibility. In other regions biologists and wardens have virtually no block management responsibilities. Based on comments and observations made during the audit we are not sure biologists and wardens are aware of all the nuances of the Block Management Program. Having biologists and wardens negotiate contracts leads to inconsistencies in information given the landowners. These biologists and wardens are then responsible for the administration of the contract process. *We recommend the Block Management Coordinators in each region be responsible for contract administration and sign installation for the Block Management Program.*

Improvements in Operating Efficiency

When discussing the Block Management Program with regional staff, and reviewing documentation from Block Management Coordinators and annual reports, we noted a number of activities occurring in some regions that would be helpful in other regions. Many of the activities are included in annual reports each coordinator writes and sends to Helena. Reports also contain forms used for hunter day tabulation and post-season surveys, letters sent

to landowners, etc. The coordinators could send the reports, forms, computer spreadsheets, letters, etc., they use that are not in the reports to their fellow coordinators when the reports are sent to Helena. Streamlining and coordination between regions would likely occur. *We recommend the department increase coordination among the regions by establishing a process that ensures Block Management Coordinators review other region's annual reports and documentation, and establish a forum to discuss the various methods for completing the same or similar block management tasks.*

Compiling Information Using a Computer

A number of regions use computers and various software packages to gather block management information. This includes regional contract information which is again input into a computer in Helena. There does not seem to be any standard format or software used in the regions and Helena. If the coordinators and Helena staff discussed and agreed to a format for contracts, Helena staff would not have to re-input the information. If the regions agreed to a format and software for permission slip/roster information, other regions could access information. *We recommend the Block Management Coordinators and Helena staff use the same software for contract and permission slip/roster information, and develop a common format for contract and permission slip/roster information so information only needs to be input once and can be used by all the regions and Helena.*

Conclusion

Overall, it appears the enhanced Block Management Program opened some previously closed land to free public hunting. In this regard it is meeting one of its goals. If alternative forms of compensation to landowners are created, it appears more land could be enrolled in the program.

Chapter I - Introduction

Introduction

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Block Management Program was developed to help manage wildlife resources and the impacts to landowners from public hunting. The program provides benefits to landowners to encourage public access to their land. The Field Services Division, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) administers the Block Management Program.

Legislative Audit Committee members raised questions about the Block Management Program after the 1996 hunting season, the first season of the enhanced program. Based on comments received, a performance audit of the program was scheduled. Initial contact with program staff was made in early 1997. Staff informed us of proposed changes in the program prior to the 1997 hunting season. Based on the information gathered, we delayed the audit until 1999.

Audit Objectives

Our general audit objectives were:

1. Identify the program's objectives.
2. Determine criteria used by the department to measure success of the program.
3. Determine if criteria appear reasonable.
4. Determine if program is operating effectively.
5. Recommend any efficiencies for program operations.

Audit Scope and Methodologies

The audit concentrated primarily on program activities followed for the 1997 and 1998 hunting seasons. Some information from the 1989 through 1996 hunting seasons is included as background.

Since the majority of on-the-ground activities for the program occur in the regions, we traveled to six of FWP's seven regional offices. We interviewed all block management coordinators, six regional supervisors, wildlife managers and warden captains, and a number of biologists and wardens to determine their roles in the Block Management Program and how the program's objectives changed, if at all, as result of House Bill 195 (Chapter 459, Laws of 1995) passed by the 1995 Legislature. We sent letters explaining the audit to biologists and wardens we did not interview, plus members of the

Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission, Private Land/Public Wildlife Council, and sportsman groups, wildlife organizations and gun clubs asking for any comments or concerns.

While in the regions we reviewed documentation of the approval process used for enrolling landowners in the program, post-season audits and results, and other information on file. We also reviewed compliance with rules, especially criteria for enrolling land currently in the Block Management Program.

We obtained the 1999 hunting season tabloids and a sample of Block Management Area (BMA) maps to determine how easy it is to obtain the information. We traveled to a number of BMAs to determine if the maps provided enough information to find the BMAs and if signs were installed.

We attended the annual Block Management Coordinator meeting and regional meetings to determine what information is disseminated to regional Block Management Coordinators and staff. We also obtained the annual regional reports for the 1997 and 1998 hunting seasons to obtain an understanding of how the program operates in each region. We reviewed past legislation concerning the program and reports created as a result of legislation.

Regional expenditures for the Block Management Program were obtained from the Statewide Budgeting and Accounting System (SBAS). We also obtained regional payments to landowners from SBAS.

Questionnaires were sent to landowners in the program, to landowners wanting to enroll, to landowners no longer enrolled, and to landowners who did not have an interest in enrolling to determine their opinion of the program. A questionnaire was sent to hunters to determine their knowledge of the Block Management Program and to determine their experiences if they hunted on a BMA in 1998. The appendices contain survey results.

A number of landowners who participate in the Block Management Program have a conservation easement on their land and/or are

involved in an Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program project. We determined how many landowners are involved in block management and one of the other programs, and the compensation they received under the other program. We then reviewed the feasibility of coordinating the access allowed under the other programs with block management. We contacted other states to determine how they address hunter access.

A limited number of BMAs can be used by outfitters. We compared the names of landowners listed as giving outfitters approval to hunt on their land to the names of landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program who allowed outfitting on their land.

This audit was conducted in accordance with government standards for performance audits.

Compliance

We examined compliance with statutes and administrative rules pertaining to the Block Management Program. Our audit work indicates the department is generally in compliance with the statutory requirements outlining overall responsibilities.

Management Memorandum

During the audit, we noted some minor concerns relative to other issues addressed in this report. We presented suggestions to the department on these topics, which could result in operating improvements. A management memorandum was sent to the department concerning the following:

Warden Use of Permission Slips - Many landowners require hunters to obtain a permission slip prior to hunting on the land. The slips are sent to the regional office at the end of the hunting season. A few game wardens indicated they review permission slips as a tool in enforcement investigations, such as residency and outfitter use. Other wardens should consider reviewing permission slips and rosters for enforcement violations.

Communication with Biologists and Wardens - Block Management Coordinators meet annually and are provided updates for any changes in the program. Coordinators are then to provide the information to biologists and wardens in their respective regions. The current process does not facilitate for sharing or exchanging information about the program to all wildlife biologists and all

wardens at one time. The Landowner/Sportsman Coordinator could attend the Wildlife and Enforcement Divisions biennial meetings (that require mandatory attendance by biologists and wardens) to explain the program and answer questions.

Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program Compensation - The Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program compensates landowners not enrolled in the Block Management Program at a rate equal to the taxable value of the animal killed. Landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program are compensated at full market value for livestock killed. Compensation should be based on a common factor whether a landowner is in the Block Management Program or not.

Areas for Further Study

We identified two areas we believe could be studied further. The issues pertain to use of computer software and use of information at the Board of Outfitters and Guides. These areas are discussed in greater detail below.

Use of Computer Software

During the Block Management Program audit, we noted there was little coordination of the software used or the format for information input into computers located throughout the regions. This caused duplication of input and information that could not be shared. Block management is one of many department programs. We believe a study should be conducted to determine if software coordination could create efficiencies in other programs.

Comparing Block Management to Board of Outfitter Records

Outfitters are required to record the land they can hunt on via a Land Use Approval Form or an Outfitting Operations Plan filed with the Board of Outfitters and Guides. If an outfitter is taking clients on a BMA to hunt, the permission is to be on file at the Field Services Division. Department staff believed some outfitters used BMAs when they did not have permission. Further work could indicate if outfitters are using BMAs.

Report Organization

This report is presented in six chapters. Chapter II provides general background information about the Block Management Program. Chapter III discusses program growth. Chapter IV contains recommendations directed at the program's effectiveness. Program efficiency is discussed in Chapter V. Chapter VI contains an overall conclusion about the program.

Chapter II - Background

Introduction

The mission of the Block Management Program is " . . .to maintain Montana's hunting heritage and traditions by providing landowners with tangible benefits to encourage public hunting access to private land, promote partnerships between landowners, hunters, and the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and help manage wildlife resources and the impacts of public hunting."

Department Organization

A five member Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission sets policy for the fulfillment of the responsibilities of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as provided by law. Department headquarters is located in Helena and central office staff are responsible for setting direction regarding policy, planning, program development, guidelines and budgets. The Block Management Program is administered by the Field Services Division.

Decentralized System

The department's organizational structure is partially decentralized. The department divided the state into seven geographic regions to provide for more direct management of the state's wildlife, fisheries, and parks resources. Each region is staffed with a regional supervisor, a fisheries manager, a wildlife manager, and varying numbers of biologists, technicians, wardens, and parks staff to implement and monitor most policy and management activities at the regional level. In most regions wildlife managers supervise day-to-day activities for Block Management Program activities. The managers report to the regional supervisor.

The regional supervisor administers overall activities within the region. This includes providing recommendations on program development and department guidelines to FWP headquarters in Helena. Regional supervisors report to the department's chief of operations.

Figure 1 shows regional boundaries.

Figure 1
FWP Regional Boundaries

1 - Kalispell
2 - Missoula
3 - Bozeman
4 - Great Falls
5 - Billings
6 - Glasgow
7 - Miles City

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Block Management Program Staffing

In fiscal year 1998-99 there were 11.78 FTE dedicated to the Block Management Program. FTE consist of a Block Management Coordinator in each region (this position can be split between block management and another program such as Wildlife or Enforcement), and temporary seasonal positions. Some regions also have administrative staff assigned to block management.

Two FTE dedicated to the program were added in each fiscal year, 1996-97 and 1997-98. The four FTE are assigned to the regions as conservation specialists or Block Management Coordinators. There is one FTE in Helena administering the program.

For the 1998 hunting season the budgeted FTE were distributed in the regions as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Block Management Budgeted FTE per Region
(1998 Hunting Season)

Region	FTE
1 (Kalispell)	0.65
2 (Missoula)	2.10
3 (Bozeman)	1.35
4 (Great Falls)	2.23
5 (Billings)	1.18
6 (Glasgow)	1.95
7 (Miles City)	2.32
Total	11.78

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Region 3 Block Management Coordinator

Region 3's Block Management Coordinator expenses are paid from the region's wildlife budget so his FTE is not recorded in the block management budget. The coordinator estimated he spent 60 to 70 percent of his time on block management in fiscal year 1998-99.

Warden Time Spent on Block Management

In most regions wardens have an operating budget for block management but not personnel budget. Personnel expenses are included in the regional enforcement budget. A total of 2,657 warden hours were spent state-wide on block management in 1998. That equates to 1.28 FTE.

Wildlife Biologist Time Spent on Block Management

In three regions biologists charge operating, and in some cases personnel expenses, to the region's wildlife budget for their block management activities. The other regions do not determine biologist time on block management.

Summary

The department has 11.78 FTE budgeted to the Block Management Program in the regions. A number of other regional staff are also involved in the program. From records provided, we estimate approximately 16 FTE worked in the Block Management Program in fiscal year 1998-99.

Revenues and Expenditures

Block Management Program expenditures include department operating expenses and payments to landowners enrolled in the program. Revenues generated from the sale of market-based outfitter-sponsored non-resident deer and elk combination licenses support the program. Revenues generated from the licenses for fiscal years 1996-97 through 1998-99 were: $2,905,084, $2,704,855, and $2,873,328, respectively.

Federal Pittman-Robertson money is also used to pay landowners enrolled in the program. Federal dollars in fiscal year 1996-97 totaled $274,125, in fiscal year 1997-98 $285,090 and in 1998-99 $296,494. The department amended its federal grant to allow it to spend Pittman-Robertson money for the Block Management Program.

Table 2 shows number of landowners, acres involved, and payments to landowners for the 1996 through 1998 hunting seasons. Table 3 shows direct regional expenditures for the Block Management Program excluding incentive payments.

Table 2
Block Management Landowners, Acres, and Payments
(1996 through 1998 Hunting Seasons)

Year	Total Landowners	Total Acres	Total Incentive Payments
1996	882	7,130,119	$2,757,103
1997	937	7,545,606	$2,571,381
1998	917	7,273,723	$2,541,936

Source: Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records and SBAS.

Table 3
Regional Block Management Expenditures
(Fiscal Years 1996-97 through 1998-99)

Region	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
1 (Kalispell)	$42,611	$54,628	$33,284
2 (Missoula)	$70,596	$76,968	$71,027
3 (Bozeman)	$47,435	$81,286	$77,047
4 (Great Falls)	$71,093	$97,037	$82,148
5 (Billings)	$52,726	$55,167	$53,275
6 (Glasgow)	$75,225	$101,240	$75,612
7 (Miles City)	$131,431	$122,267	$124,934
Total	$491,117	$588,593	$517,327

Source: Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from SBAS.

How Much Private Land is Open to Public Hunting?

Using available information created by the department we compared the number of acres in block management to the number of privately owned acres open to public hunting. Information was only available for mule deer hunting. In 1995 the department issued a report on Montana deer and deer hunting. In that report FWP wildlife biologists estimated the amount of private land per hunting district, and how much of that was open, leased, or restricted for mule deer hunting. We compared numbers in that report to the number of acres in block management in 1995 and 1998 for mule deer hunting. The following table shows the results. There are approximately 94 million acres of land in Montana.

Table 4
Private Land Open for Mule Deer Hunting in MT

Region	Total Private Acres	Open Private Acres	1995 BM Acres	1998 BM Acres	% Private Acres Open in BM in 1998
1	1,569,344	797,239	793,830	792,490	99.40%
2	2,485,248	1,113,012	324,092	278,855	25.05%
3	5,083,411	1,907,287	273,648	522,529	27.40%
4	10,709,472	5,214,653	655,095	764,367	14.66%
5	6,802,701	2,073,251	196,649	599,020	28.89%
6	10,318,650	8,745,325	281,745	652,042	7.46%
7	12,241,338	3,885,252	1,364,719	2,060,918	53.04%
Total	49,210,164	23,736,019	3,889,778	5,670,221	23.90%

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

As illustrated by the above table, for mule deer hunting about 24 percent of the private land open to public hunting is enrolled in block management.

Chapter III - Block Management Then and Now

Background

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) formally started the Block Management Program in 1985. Prior to 1985 a number of landowners expressed concerns to the department about the number of hunters on their land, damage to the land, and the time it took the landowner to deal with hunters. Some landowners were threatening to close their land to all public hunting. In response, the department created the Block Management Program. The intent of the program was to help landowners control hunters on their land.

Program Formally Organized in 1985

In 1985 the department developed formal incentives to recognize and reward landowners for their assistance to the public during hunting seasons. The strategy, block management, rewarded landowners for services rendered to hunters. Primary focus centered on maintaining free public access to private lands with big game hunting opportunities. Landowners participating in block management were assisted by FWP in reducing interruptions to farm and ranch operations associated with hunting. A variety of landowner incentives using sportsman license dollars were used. Incentives included:

- Signs, maps, permission booklets.
- Livestock loss insurance.
- Game damage materials.
- Temporary department personnel were hired to manage hunting activities on large ranches, or a group of ranches. They were responsible for issuing permission slips, directing hunters, signing areas and patrolling the property.
- The majority of landowners desired to act as their own resource manager. In those cases a monetary reimbursement was provided to compensate landowners for their services in managing hunters. A maximum of $2,000 for any one contract was recommended.
- Landowner liability protection. Under section 70-16-302, MCA, if a landowner permitted hunters to use his land and did not charge a fee or accept other compensation from hunters, the landowner's liability was assumed to be at the lowest level.

Program Guidelines and Administrative Rules Written

Each region created a Block Management Program responsive to concerns of landowners in that region. Overall guidelines were written in 1990 so all regions would follow the same framework. The guidelines established a program purpose, eligibility criteria for participation, program evaluation, compensation guidelines, types of administration of Block Management Areas (BMAs), and requirements for outfitting on BMAs.

The guidelines indicated selection of landowners involved in block management needed to be based on criteria which served the needs and objectives of landowners, sportsman, and the department. Criteria included:

- Land which was a high priority resource and habitat area as defined by statewide and regional management objectives.
- Potential existed to establish a cooperative relationship between the department and landowner(s) for more long-term management.
- The area would result in increased hunter opportunity and provide a reasonable number of hunter days.
- Enrollment may allow hunter access to adjoining public land.
- The area had a history of game damage and the opportunity to reduce problems.

The program was to be evaluated quantitatively to determine regional/statewide benefits and provide future direction. Harvest objectives were to be used as a basis to determine success and cost effectiveness.

Administrative Rules were created in 1994. The rules essentially followed the guidelines. Program evaluation and compensation guidelines were not included in the rules.

Block Management Participation Statistics

Table 5 shows the number of landowners and acres enrolled in the program from 1989 through 1995 by region. Information for the 1992 hunting season is not available.

Table 5
Regional Block Management Participation
(1989 through 1995)

Year	Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
1989	Acres	2,100	304,253	403,200	490,560	165,620	503,135	2,700,000	4,568,868
	Owners	2	56	49	64	15	65	95	346
1990	Acres	2,100	340,458	793,740	1,014,960	247,050	737,280	2,042,176	5,177,764
	Owners	3	157	35	61	19	62	106	443
1991	Acres	23,730	438,338	794,911	1,064,020	331,350	653,230	2,348,288	5,653,867
	Owners	4	162	38	64	20	77	134	499
1993	Acres	23,890	429,648	488,563	801,030	137,259	409,700	1,779,355	4,069,445
	Owners	5	158	44	70	14	56	126	473
1994	Acres	794,730	442,946	311,319	866,255	278,189	517,282	1,801,000	5,011,721
	Owners	6	143	37	75	18	85	137	501
1995	Acres	847,520	407,980	355,299	622,157	290,279	505,953	2,047,643	5,076,831
	Owners	5	143	45	51	26	56	145	471

Source: **Created by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Enhanced Block Management Program Created

During the 1993 Legislative Session many hunting related bills were presented by landowners, sportsmen, and outfitters. As a result, House Joint Resolution 24 was passed to address the strained relations between landowners/outfitters/sportspersons. The Governor appointed a Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council. The council presented recommendations for legislative changes in the 1995 session. Recommendations included providing tangible benefits to private landowners as an incentive to allow free public hunting. Funding would be provided from outfitter-sponsored non-resident deer or elk combination big game licenses.

House Bill 195 Passed

In 1995 the legislature passed House Bill 195 (sections 87-1-265 through 269, MCA) which created two landowner incentive programs. Both programs constitute the enhanced Block Management Program. The programs center around improving hunting access to private lands and providing tangible benefits to landowners who allow access to their lands for hunting. The Hunter Management Program (section 87-1-266, MCA) allows the department to provide sportsman licenses to resident landowners and combination licenses to non-resident landowners. The Hunter Access Enhancement Program (section 87-1-267, MCA) compensates landowners for impacts to their land by hunters or for providing access through their land to adjacent public land. Land restricted by outfitting or commercial hunting is not eligible for the program. Factors used in determining benefits to landowners include but are not limited to:

- The number of days of public hunting provided by a participating landowner;
- Wildlife habitat provided;
- Resident wildlife game populations;
- Number, sex, and species of animals taken; and
- Access provided to adjacent public lands.

A maximum of $8,000 a year can be paid to a landowner.

Incentives Committee Recommended Compensation Amounts

The department director appointed an Incentives Committee comprised of 11 sportspeople and landowners. The committee was established to provide recommendations to the FWP Commission for the department to administer the "tangible benefits" portion of the Hunter Access Enhancement Program contained in HB 195.

Based on the committee's recommendations the following compensation amounts for landowners were established:

- Basic enrollment payment - available to landowners who enroll land in the program, paid annually for enrollment or renewal. (In 1996 the enrollment payment was $500. The payment was

reduced to $250 for 1997 and 1998 hunting seasons since the program overspent its budget in 1996.)

- Base impact payment - available to any landowner who enrolls land in the program. Paid annually for enrollment or renewal. Compensation is set at $6.00 per hunter day. A hunter day is defined as one hunter who hunts on the property during a calendar day.

- Length of season impact payment - available, in addition to other impact payments, to any enrollee who places no restrictions on the legal fall seasons for any species available in huntable numbers. (Species available in huntable numbers is to be determined by the landowner and FWP staff.) Compensation is computed at $2.00 per hunter day.

- Species/gender impact payments - available, in addition to other impact payments, to any enrollee who places no restrictions on gender/species available in huntable numbers. Compensation is computed at $2.00 per hunter day.

If the landowner provides access to isolated state/federal lands, with no enrollment of deeded land with public hunting access, compensation is computed at one-half the base impact payment rate. If no restrictions are placed on season length, landowners also receive one-half the length of season impact payment per hunter day or a total of $4.00 per hunter day.

Administrative Rules Created

In 1996 administrative rules were adopted. The 1996 rules were expansions of the 1994 rules. The major additions were for compensation to landowners and criteria for participation. Rules include:

1. Criteria for participation - five criteria are listed, essentially the same as those listed in the guidelines written in 1990.

2. Use of Block Management Areas - use restrictions are established by negotiation between FWP personnel and the landowner, priority consideration for enrollment will be given for lands that are open to all species and gender of game birds and animals available in huntable numbers.

3. Compensation to landowners - includes department oversight and supervision of hunting on a BMA including development and implementation of a hunter reservation system administered by FWP when practical, supplying permission books or other materials which document hunter use, signs or hunting-season related supplies, and monetary compensation with payments for impacts set as outlined by the Incentives Committee. (The dollar amounts paid are at the discretion of the department and are not included in the rules.)

4. When outfitting and commercial hunting activity are allowed on BMAs.

Block Management Now

Regions were requested to write a Block Management Program Implementation Plan in March 1996. The plans outlined how the regions would expand the program in terms of staffing and enrolling landowners. Five regions indicated they would target landowners already enrolled in the existing program. One region changed priorities from private companies to smaller ranches and farms that control key access points. The highest priority for new enrollments was generally landowners who were open to public hunting and/or requested assistance through block management. (One region could not locate an Implementation Plan.)

After rules were finalized in April 1996, regional staff (biologists, wardens, and Block Management Coordinators) enrolled landowners into the program. Other than enrolling existing landowners in the program, there was essentially no criteria to determine which new landowners to enroll. Staff had about three months to enroll landowners.

Number of Cooperators Enrolled in the Program

Eight hundred eighty-two (882) landowners enrolled in the program for the 1996 hunting season, up from 471 landowners in 1995. There were 917 landowners enrolled in 1998, 40 of whom were new to the program. Table 6 shows the number of landowners enrolled by region for the 1995 through 1998 hunting seasons.

Table 6
Number of Landowners Enrolled in Block Management by Region
(1995 through 1998 Hunting Seasons)

Region	Hunting Seasons			
	1995	1996	1997	1998
1 (Kalispell)	5	7	14	14
2 (Missoula)	143	103	108	106
3 (Bozeman)	45	64	66	63
4 (Great Falls)	51	170	175	161
5 (Billings)	26	116	120	115
6 (Glasgow)	56	133	159	165
7 (Miles City)	145	289	295	293
Total	471	882	937	917

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Number of Acres Enrolled in the Program

From 1989 through 1995, the number of acres enrolled in block management increased from 4.6 million to 5.1 million. In 1996 the number of acres enrolled increased to 7.1 million. Table 7 shows by region the number of acres enrolled in block management from 1995 through 1998.

Table 7
Number of Acres Enrolled in Block Management by Region
(1995 through 1998 Hunting Seasons)

Region	Hunting Seasons			
	1995	1996	1997	1998
1 (Kalispell)	847,520	860,540*	864,175*	864,175*
2 (Missoula)	407,980**	226,832	295,214	296,045
3 (Bozeman)	355,299	315,922	593,610	594,971
4 (Great Falls)	622,15	936,968	951,516	888,340
5 (Billings)	290,279	747,502	773,912	747,390
6 (Glasgow)	505,953	824,386	915,254	898,303
7 (Miles City)	2,047,643	3,217,969	3,151,925	2,984,499
Total	5,076,831	7,130,119	7,545,606	7,273,723

* Includes 790,700 acres of corporate land.
** Includes corporate land not formally enrolled in block management in 1996. The corporate land is still open to free public hunting.

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Program Administration

Each spring Block Management Coordinators and Helena staff meet to discuss any upcoming changes, concerns and improvements to the Block Management Program. A time line is established for renewing contracts and enrolling new landowners.

Contract Renewal and Enrollment

The contract renewal process differs among regions. In some regions the Block Management Coordinator renews all contracts either through the mail, in meetings with a number of landowners, or by visiting individual landowners. In other regions, wildlife biologists and wardens renew contracts, usually by visiting with individual landowners.

If money is available to enroll new landowners, the Block Management Coordinator or wildlife biologist or warden will talk to the landowner. The staff person negotiates, among other things, the payment amount based on estimated or past hunter use, huntable species on the land, ranch rules (no driving off established roads, no shooting around the house), and whether hunters need permission to hunt on the land.

Permission to Hunt Block Management Areas

The landowner and department establish a permission system that best meets the landowner's needs. In some cases no permission is needed or all a hunter has to do is sign in at a roster box when he/she enters the BMA. In other cases, the landowner completes a permission slip for each hunter and might even assign areas where the person can hunt on the land. If a landowner wants, the department can help control hunters by establishing a drawing system, setting up an answering service that takes reservations, or assigning a seasonal employee to issue permission slips. The landowner and department negotiate the system established for hunting on the land.

Regional Tabloids and Maps Created

A newspaper-like tabloid is created for each region every hunting season. Tabloid information includes a map of the region showing where BMAs are located, how to obtain the maps, how to use block management, regional information, and a table with information about each BMA in the region. The table contains the BMA name, general location, acres, dates the BMA is open to hunting, the method for obtaining permission to hunt on the BMA, huntable species present, hunting districts in which the BMA is located, and additional information.

Maps are created for each BMA in the program. Most regional Block Management Coordinators use a BLM or Forest Service map as a base map. They draw the BMA boundaries, access points, ranch headquarters if needed, and roads to the BMA on the base map. Information about the BMA is then printed on the back of the map. This information includes rules applicable to that BMA such as how to get permission if needed, if vehicles are allowed on the land, dates the BMA is open, etc.

BMAs Signed

Before the hunting season starts each BMA is supplied with necessary signs and permission materials (roster boxes and rosters, permission slips, etc.). Depending on the region, signs and, if needed roster boxes, are installed by the landowner or regional personnel.

BMA Monitoring during Hunting Season

During hunting season most regions employ seasonal personnel to help monitor BMAs. Seasonal staff (patrollers) might be assigned to specific BMAs, or might travel to a number of BMAs to ensure rules are followed. Patrollers help identify problems as they arise, keep in touch with landowners, and provide any needed supplies and signs. Wildlife biologists and wardens also provide a patrol presence on BMAs during the season.

End of Season Activities

At the end of the hunting season signs are taken down and landowners are required to send permission slips and rosters to the regional office. The Block Management Coordinator reviews the slips and rosters and records the number of hunter days for each BMA. If there are questions about use on any particular BMA, a sample of hunters using the BMA may be called. If the number of hunter days fluctuated up or down by 20 percent from the contract amount, the payment for the next hunting season is adjusted up or down to reflect the new hunter days. The new amount is determined by averaging new use with past use.

Did the Enhanced Program Open More Land for Hunting?

The Incentives Committee acknowledged the Hunter Access Enhancement Program is designed to build new relationships with landowners who have not previously allowed public hunting access, thus opening new access. FWP regional staff agreed after HB 195 land which was open to free public hunting in the past remained open. In some regions staff think the program opened land that was closed. Some also think it opened land that had limited hunting prior to HB 195. Most of the areas enrolled in 1996 already allowed public hunting.

Landowners Responses Showed Some Land was Opened to Public Hunting

We sent surveys to 307 landowners enrolled in block management in 1998 to determine if their land was open prior to enrollment. Eleven of the 175 respondents (6 percent) said their land was not open to public hunting prior to enrollment. If they had not been enrolled:

- 6 said their land would be closed to public hunting.
- 2 said they would lease or charge a fee.
- 1 said he would allow the public to hunt but would try to limit the number of hunters.
- 1 said he would allow friends and relatives to hunt.
- 1 said he would not allow any hunting.

In 1998, these 11 landowners had 17,305 acres of private land and 3,400 acres of BLM acres in the program.

One hundred forty landowners contacted the department about enrolling in the program. Their names were placed on waiting lists. We sent surveys to the landowners on the waiting lists. Four of the 50 respondents (8 percent) said their land was not open to hunting. If enrolled they would have 14,072 private acres, 2,000 State Trust Land acres, and 25,000 BLM acres to enroll. All of them stated they will be closed to public hunting if not enrolled.

We also examined the amount of land open to the general public and open with limited hunting prior to enrollment. Limited hunting includes only allowing friends and/or relatives to hunt, charging a fee, or leasing to an outfitter or sportsperson/hunter group. The following table shows the number of acres open to the public prior to the landowner enrolling in block management and the number of acres with limited hunting opened further with enrollment, based on survey results. The information includes acres for landowners enrolled in the program in 1998.

Table 8
Acres Open to Public or Limited Hunting
Prior to Enrollment per LAD Survey
(As of May 1999)

Type of Land	Prior to Enrollment		Total Acres Open to Public Hunting after Enrollment
	Open to Public Hunting	Open to Limited Hunting	
Private	589,909	121,134	711,043
State Land	75,124	11,860	86,984
BLM	115,829	37,620	153,449
Forest Service	18,000	11,630	29,630
Other	24,170	39,990	64,160
Total	823,032	222,234	1,045,266

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from survey responses.**

Land Would have Closed if not for Block Management

We also asked landowners how they would be managing hunting if not enrolled, or how they manage hunting since they dropped from the program.

Based on survey results, 43 of the 113 landowners in the program that allowed general public hunting prior to enrollment would have closed their land to public hunting. Three would have leased their land, one would have closed it altogether, and 39 would have provided limited hunting (friends, relatives, charge a fee).

Fourteen of the twenty-nine landowners on the waiting lists that were open to public hunting said if they were not enrolled they would not be open to public hunting. Eight of the fourteen would have limited hunting, and six said they would allow friends/relatives, charge a fee, etc.

Nineteen of the forty landowners no longer enrolled said they were open to public hunting before enrolling and are still open to public hunting. Three of the forty said they are closed to hunting to the general public. Two of the three allow relatives to hunt. Eight said they are open to friends/relatives. Six are leasing. One is closed to all hunting, and one charges a fee. Two landowners did not indicate how they manage hunting.

Table 9 shows the number of acres that have limited or no public hunting for landowners not enrolled in the program. The landowners are either interested in enrolling and have not been, or are no longer enrolled in the program.

Table 9
How Hunting is Managed on Land not Enrolled in Block Management per LAD Survey
(As of May 1999)

	Acres				
Type of Land	Closed to public hunting	Charge a fee for hunting	Lease to outfitter/ group	Closed to all hunting	Total
Private	98,670	7,000	32,681	1,020	139,371
State Land	13,100	1,400	2,880	360	17,740
BLM	20,620	0	20,925	5,000	46,545
Forest Service	50,000	0	5,000	0	55,000
Total	182,390	8,400	61,486	6,380	258,656

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from survey responses.**

Conclusion

Based on information from the surveys, the current Block Management Program opened some land for free public hunting. Some of the land opened was not open at all to hunting, and other land was open to limited hunting. Eighty percent of the land was open to general hunting prior to the landowner enrolling in the program. In 1998, block management comprised about of 24 percent of the land open to mule deer hunting.

Chapter IV - Block Management Effectiveness

Introduction

As part of our audit of the Block Management Program we reviewed the mission of the program, its goals and objectives, and how the program's success is measured. This chapter also discusses other programs which address access and landowner compensation.

Measuring Program Success

We traveled to six of the seven regions and asked staff what they considered the program's goal. The general consensus was the goal is to enhance public hunter access and improve landowner/ sportsperson/department relationships. This is consistent with the results of the initial Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council study.

We then asked staff how they measure the success of the program. What criteria is used to measure if the program is successful or meeting its goal? What are the expected outcomes? The answers varied from "number of hunter days" to "complaints from landowners and hunters." Staff also mentioned the results of FWP surveys sent to landowners enrolled in the program in 1996 and/or 1998, and a survey sent to sportspersons who hunted on a BMA in 1996. The surveys provided hunter and landowner satisfaction levels with various aspects of the program such as hunter management, methods of obtaining permission, landowner/hunter relations, etc, and the program overall. No one had any consistent outcomes or formal criteria they used to measure program success.

Mission Statement and Goals Created

An internal working group created a mission statement, a set of goals, and enrollment criteria in 1998. The mission statement starts by describing the program as ". . . a cooperative, adaptable program designed to maintain Montana's hunting heritage and traditions by providing landowners with tangible benefits to encourage public hunting access to private land. . ." It then goes on to describe what seems to be the program's mission to ". . . promote partnerships between landowners, hunters, and the department, and help manage wildlife resources and the impacts of public hunting."

Goals were established in five categories: Wildlife Management, Hunter Opportunity, Landowner Relations, Administrative Accountability, and Participant Education/Stewardship. Each "goal"

has two to three statements related to the goal. For example, the two statements under Wildlife Management, are:

1. Program supports state and regional wildlife program objectives.

2. Program supports other department wildlife programs.

The enrollment criteria elaborate on the individual goal statements. Enrollment criteria for wildlife management are:

1. Located in high priority resource and habitat area as defined by management objectives.

2. History of game damage problems.

3. Opportunity to link with other department wildlife programs.

Criteria to Measure Program Success Needed

Staff have not established specific criteria to measure the success or outcomes of the program. Staff mention the satisfaction level of the landowners and hunters based on results of surveys conducted by the department, but they have not established a level of satisfaction they should achieve. Hunter numbers, acres in the program, harvest data are also mentioned as criteria but no baseline numbers have been established to measure the current numbers against. When Block Management Program guidelines were created in 1990, one guideline was to evaluate the program quantitatively to determine regional/statewide benefits and provide future direction. A number of items were listed which were to be evaluated on a statewide and regional basis to provide determinations for future direction. Department staff indicated no formal evaluations were completed. Staff did discuss regional funding each year based on some of the items listed in the guidelines.

Documenting relevant, verifiable goals and measurable objectives is fundamental to establishing measurable standards and outcomes for a program. Goals should relate to the purpose and mission of the program, correspond to statutory intent, and provide a clear direction for action. Goals answer the question "Where do we want to be?" Objectives identify specific levels of achievement toward the

goal. Objectives relate directly to program goals and should describe specific and measurable targets, results, or outcomes. Objectives should be result-oriented, attainable, and allow management to track responsibilities and accomplishments within a program. They are the specific expectations against which program performance is measured.

Strategies which describe specific courses of action to accomplish the goals and objectives also need to be developed. Strategies indicate how goals and objectives will be achieved and determine the amount and type of resources that must be allocated.

The new Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council is directed to report to the governor and the 2001 Legislature regarding the success of various elements of the Hunting Access Enhancement Program. The council is directed to ". . . make suggestions for funding, modification, or improvement needed to achieve the objectives of the program." Currently, the council has no clear objectives, criteria, or benchmarks to measure against.

The department has a good start on goals and objectives with the mission statement, goals, and enrollment criteria they established in 1998. Its next step should be to develop criteria and strategies which can be used to measure the success/outcomes of the program.

The department agreed with the recommendation to establish goals and measurable criteria. Staff are discussing integrating the goals and objectives for the Block Management Program with the overall goals of the broader wildlife program.

Recommendation #1
We recommend the department:

A. Create specific objectives that relate to the purpose and mission of the program.

B. Establish measurable criteria which relate directly to the goals and objectives, and develop strategies to allow for attaining desired results or outcomes.

Other Department Programs Addressing Access

House Bill 195 included language allowing the department to " . . . develop similar efforts outside the scope of the block management program that are designed to promote public access to private lands for hunting purposes." The Wildlife Division administers two programs which address public access to private lands for hunting purposes - the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program and Habitat Montana. We examined coordination of the three programs. The Private Land/Public Wildlife Council is also examining access to private and public land. This section discusses program coordination and the council's mission regarding access.

Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program (UGBP)

The UGBP focuses on enhancing habitat for upland game birds. Enhancements include planting shelterbelts, restoration grazing systems, food plots, nesting cover (which includes land set aside under the Federal Conservation Reserve Program), and wetland restoration. The program is funded entirely from a portion of hunting license fees for upland game birds and resident and non-resident sportsman licenses.

From January 1990 through September 1999, five hundred eighteen (518) landowners entered into 648 project contracts. Table 10 shows the number of landowners and projects in each region.

Table 10
Number of Cooperators and Upland Bird Projects by Region
(January 1990 through September 1999)

Region	# Landowners	# Projects
1 (Kalispell)	8	8
2 (Missoula)	29	39
3 (Bozeman)	13	13
4 (Great Falls)	111	144
5 (Billings)	40	57
6 (Glasgow)	266	322
7 (Miles City)	51	64
Total	518	647

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Section 87-1-248, MCA, requires upland game bird projects on private lands be open to public hunting in accordance with reasonable use limitations imposed by the landowner. Terms of the new contracts state the landowner is aware of certain obligations and requirements concerning enrollment. The requirements include: allowing a reasonable amount of free upland game bird hunting, not charging for hunting or access to the acres enrolled, signing the area by the department showing the land is enrolled, and possibly publishing the location of the area. One criterion for selecting projects for program funds is a biologist's estimate of the potential number of hunter days a project will provide.

Habitat Montana Program

The Habitat Montana Program focuses on protecting and preserving critical wildlife habitat by purchasing fee title, conservation easements, or leasing land. The department has contracts with private individuals for 28 wildlife conservation easements.

Table 11 shows the location and number of acres in the 28 conservation easements acquired from private individuals under the Habitat Montana Program as of October 1999.

Table 11
Conservation Easement Numbers and Acres by Region
(As of October 1999)

Region	Number Easements	Acres
2 (Missoula)	7	12,600
3 (Bozeman)	13	62,859
4 (Great Falls)	3	14,187
6 (Glasgow)	2	21,975
7 (Miles City)	3	32,799
Total	28	144,420

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Statute does not require lands/habitat acquired through Habitat Montana to be open to public access. Administrative rules state "The [FWP] commission intends Habitat Montana to deliver the following services and benefits: . . . b) contribute to hunting and fishing opportunities." Per department management, staff will not select lands for the program if the landowner will not grant public access. At the time of the audit the contracts for the 28 conservation easements required free public hunting.

Cooperators in Block Management and Another Program

We compared the landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program with those enrolled in the UGBP or in a conservation easement to determine how many landowners are enrolled in more than one program. We found 64 landowners were in the UGBP and were enrolled in block management for the 1998 hunting season. The 64 landowners received $206,466 from block management in 1998. They have also received $1,618,447 for the UGBP project

contracts. Contracts for the UGBP run from 5 to 20 years. Landowners receive payments for UGBP projects upon submission of bills. For the landowners participating in both block management and the UGBP, a total of 451,377 acres were enrolled in block management and 238,647 acres were involved in the UGBP projects.

Of the 28 landowners with conservation easements, we found 16 are also in the Block Management Program. Table 12 shows the number of BMAs and easements by region, and compares the year the landowner enrolled in block management and entered the conservation easement contract, cost, and acres between the two programs. The block management payment is for the 1998 hunting season and may vary between years. The conservation easement payment is a lump sum paid when the easement is established.

Table 12
Landowners in Block Management and with a Conservation Easement
(1998 Hunting Season)

Region/ Landowner	Program	Year Enrolled/ Established	Amount Paid	Acres
2/A	BMA	1992	$976/yr	3,000
	CE	1993	$350,000	3,000
2/B	BMA	1996	$500/yr	320
	CE	1997	$500,000	1,554
3/A	BMA	1995	$8,000/yr	23,680
	CE	1997	$1,250,000	9,469
	CE	1998	$150,000	1,360
3/B	BMA	1989	$8,000/yr	11,000
	CE	1998	$2,350,000	12,000
3/C	BMA	1996	$3,350/yr	1,600
	CE	1998	$250,000	1,685
3/D	BMA	1990	$2,280/yr	4,160
	CE	1996	$415,384	1,154
3/E	BMA	1989	$8,000/yr	44,765
	CE	1996	$1,086,690	10,867
	CE	1996	$404,000	4,040
3/F	BMA	1995	$2,000/yr	1,360
	CE	1996	$315,000	1,584
4/A	BMA	1997	$1,050/yr	3,869
	CE	1996	$580,350	3,869
6/A	BMA	1989	$7,500/yr	22,320
	CE	1994	$640,000	3,803
	CE	1994	$735,000	18,173
7/A	BMA	1988	$5,890/yr	17,843
	CE	1990	$1,100,000	17,845
7/B	BMA	1994	$3,155/yr	8,327
	CE	1997	$255,000	6,045
7/C	BMA	1994	$5,850/yr	8,926
	CE	1997	$585,000	8,909

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Four landowners in the Block Management Program have conservation easements and one or two UGBP projects. Table 13 compares the dates, dollars, and acres in the three programs for the four landowners. The block management contract is for the 1998 hunting season and payments may vary by year. All the UGBP contracts are for 15 years. The conservation easements are for perpetuity.

Table 13
Landowners in All Three Programs
(1998 Hunting Season)

Region	Amount Paid			Number Acres			Year Enrolled/ Established		
	BM	CE	UGBP	BM	CE	UGBP	BM	CE	UGBP
3	$8,000	$2,350,000	$3,500	11,000	12,000	0	1989	1998	1994
3	$3,350	$250,000	$7,000	1,600	1,685	12	1996	1998	1992
6	$7,500	$1,375,000	$94,165	22,320	21,175	33,560	1989	1994	1994
7	$3,155	$255,000	$125,707 $44,252	8,237	6,045	6,685 6,685	1994	1997	1993 1996

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

Monitoring Hunter Use

We asked regional staff if they monitor hunter use on the conservation easements and the UGBP projects. They all said they did not. They thought all but two or so landowners with conservation easements are in the Block Management Program. They also indicated they thought most of the UGBP projects were in block management so they relied on that program to monitor hunting for both programs. However, we found only about half of the easements and 10 percent of the UGBP projects are enrolled in block management.

Advertising the Areas

Currently, hunters cannot readily find a conservation easement or an UGBP project to hunt because neither are "advertised". A 1998 contracted evaluation of the UGBP indicated problems with public access to project areas. The evaluation found many projects appeared closed to public hunting because of improper signing; about one-half of the projects were not signed. The evaluators observed improper signing in all regions.

Our audit confirmed the evaluator's findings. Division management stated some biologists/regions are reluctant and hesitant to sign projects, the concern being publicizing the project would inundate those landowners with hunters. Regional staff also indicated they are hesitant to sign and/or publish projects due to potential cooperator withdrawal from the program if they have to deal with a lot of hunters.

Public information about project areas is primarily limited to: 1) department personnel responding to individual requests for information, 2) hunters reviewing documentation in project files, and 3) hunters looking for signs in the field. If signs are located by the hunter, they do not include information on how to contact the landowner. The evaluation report stated ". . . the average hunter may not be aware of the program. The percent of hunters educated about the program is low."

Acquiring free public hunting through UGBP projects as required by statute has limited value if hunters can not readily obtain location and contact information. If hunters are aware of the program and inquire about it at a regional office, most regions do not have a list of landowners in the program. The hunter or staff person would have to search through files.

Summary

The department has three programs which address access to private land for free public hunting. The Block Management Program provides landowners with tangible benefits to offset the impacts of hunters. The Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program increases habitat for birds and other wildlife, and requires the landowner to provide free public hunting on the project land. Conservation easements have contract language requiring

landowners to allow free public hunting. Audit work showed staff do not coordinate the access portions of the three programs. Many staff thought hunting on conservation easements and UGBP projects was monitored through enrollment in the Block Management Program. This is not the case.

The Wildlife Division Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision, issued April 1999, states the department will use habitat programs to encourage and acquire public access to private lands. The department is doing this by requiring free public hunting be included in conservation easement and UGBP contracts. What is lacking is any advertising of the areas or monitoring of hunting to ensure areas are open to free public hunting.

If UGBP projects are required to be in Block Management:

- landowners would be provided materials and/or personnel to help manage hunters,
- lack of monitoring of hunter use on UGBP projects and conservation easements would be addressed,
- land in the programs would be publicized,
- more land than just that enrolled in the project might be available to hunting, and
- hunters could be dispersed.

The department generally agreed with coordinating access under the three programs and publicizing and monitoring hunter use. Staff pointed out that the UGBP statute allows landowners to limit access to reasonable use. The department has not defined "reasonable use" as is discussed in the performance audit of the Wildlife Division (98P-11).

Recommendation #2
We recommend the department develop methods to:

A. Coordinate access provided under the Block Management Program, the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program, and Habitat Montana.

B. Publicize and monitor hunting on conservation easements and the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program projects.

Private Land/Public Wildlife Council to Review Access Issues

The Private Land/Public Wildlife Council is also charged with addressing access. The Governor asked the council to make recommendations on how best to achieve the goal of providing public hunting access on private land and isolated public land. The Governor also encouraged the council to focus on specific issues and ask questions like "How big should block management be, what role should it have in the broader scheme of hunting access, and what resources and incentives are necessary to maintain it at whatever level the council recommends?' The council will be discussing these issues leading up to the 2001 session.

Access Coordination Needed

With three internal programs in two divisions addressing access, and an external council reviewing and making recommendations pertaining to access, the department should consider establishing/appointing an access coordination function. This function could ensure the three programs coordinate to ensure land open to free public hunting is publicized and hunting is monitored, and recommendations from the council are incorporated into department operations.

Access is one of the biggest issues the department faces with the hunting and non-hunting public. Having three different individuals in two separate divisions and a council working separately is not conducive to a comprehensive coordinated approach.

The Wildlife Division Programmatic EIS Record of Decision states "Public comment overwhelmingly favored FWP involvement in obtaining public access for recreation on both public and private

land." Other comments included support for the department to pursue access for non-hunting recreation. In the future, if appropriate funding is provided, the function of access coordination could also pursue recreational access not only for wildlife viewers but also hikers and other recreationists.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the department establish an access coordination function.

Landowner Compensation

Landowners enrolled in block management are provided tangible benefits. Tangible benefits include supervision and oversight of hunting (providing a department employee to help manage hunters), providing signs, permission books or other supplies, and money to pay for potential impacts caused by hunters. The department is working under the belief these benefits help ensure public access, and enhances landowner/department relations.

The department was also budgeted additional wardens and other FTE to provide more of a presence in the field, which is what some landowners want.

Current System does not Differentiate Impacts to Determine Compensation

Statute specifies the Hunting Access Enhancement Program ". . . must be designed to provide tangible benefits to participating private landowners who grant access to their land for public hunting." The statute goes on to say "Benefits will be provided to offset *potential impacts* associated with public hunting access, including but not limited to those associated with general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, liability insurance, roads, fences, and parking area maintenance."(emphasis added) The Incentives Advisory Committee established to determine the tangible benefits portion of the law agreed its charge was to respond to the question:

> "How will the available funds be allocated in a manner that provides the optimum amount of hunter opportunity while compensating landowners with tangible benefits in a fair and

equitable manner commensurate to hunting opportunity provided?"

Rules specify that impacts include those identified in section 87-1-267(5), MCA, plus time spent dealing with hunters. Types of impact payments described in the rules are the same as recommended by the Incentives Advisory Committee.

We examined the current compensation system and found the system is based on the number of hunter days occurring during the hunting season and does not differentiate compensation for the actual or potential impacts to the land or landowner as specified by law. The Incentives Committee decided the level of impact could most directly be correlated to the number of hunter days so landowners are paid per hunter day. But, under the current system, every landowner is paid $6.00 per hunter day, no matter what the impacts. Some landowners incur more impacts than others. For example, a landowner who has a roster box at a parking area of a walk-in area and never sees a hunter is paid the same base amount ($6.00) as the landowner who issues permission slips and assigns hunters to specific areas to which hunters can drive. The first landowner does not have the "inconvenience" of dealing with hunters, does not have road maintenance issues, and has decreased weed problems compared to the second landowner. If the system were set up to pay for "impacts" the second landowner should technically receive more money per hunter than the first landowner since the second landowner has more impacts to him and his land.

The base impact payment could be modified to consider fixed and variable payments based on hunter day. For example, every landowner could be paid a certain amount per hunter day. As the impacts increase - dealing with hunters, road maintenance, weed control - the payment would increase. The amount of the increase could be based on each specific type of impact, or a general level of impacts. For example, if a landowner allows hunters to drive on the property, there could be an amount for each impact allowing vehicles on the land creates (road maintenance, weed control, gates left open, etc.), or an amount for the general level of impacts of driving on the land.

The current payment system structure also does not recognize landowners' attempts to control the number of hunters on the land to potentially increase the "quality" of the hunt. Regional staff indicated hunters told them some BMAs have so many people hunting on the area all the animals were driven into surrounding ranches and it was a waste of time to go to the BMA. A payment system based on impacts and hunter days does not create an incentive to landowners to limit the number of hunters on land since the fewer hunters a landowner allows on, the lower the total compensation. By creating a system that provides an incentive to limit hunter numbers, the quality of the hunting experience for the sportspeople that do hunt on the land could increase.

The enhanced Block Management Program has been in existence for four hunting seasons. While the current system provided for a basis to establish the program, we believe the department should re-evaluate the base payment system used to compensate landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program.

In response to our recommendation, the department indicated as a result of Senate Bill 338, (Chapter 459, Laws of 1999), which extended the Block Management Program until the year 2006, the department appointed a committee of hunters, landowners, and department staff to advise the department about how to improve the current program. The committee (the Block Management Working Group) was appointed in August 1999. Department staff indicated the committee will focus its efforts on such things as the current compensation system.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the department re-evaluate the current base payment system used to compensate landowners enrolled in the Block Management Program.

Forms of Compensation Other than Money

At the current time, the program is not growing due to lack of resources and money to compensate landowners. Department officials indicated monetary compensation in conjunction with a resident sportsman license are the only forms of benefits they can provide to resident landowners. Non-resident landowners can receive compensation or a non-resident big game combination license.

Many field staff indicated landowners would be willing to accept some form of benefit other than money to enter into the program. Suggestions included:

- Gates, fences,
- Weed control,
- Lower tax rate,
- Sportsman license(s),
- Tags/permits from the special drawing,
- Establish preference points on the special drawing system for permits/tags, and
- Menu of hunting licenses instead of just a sportsman license.

This concept is supported by responses to our landowner surveys. All landowners were not expecting direct compensation from the program. Monetary incentive was a high priority, but managing hunter numbers and hunter activities were rated just as high.

Landowner Reasons for Wanting to Enroll in the Program

We sent surveys to a sample of landowners wanting to enroll, landowners enrolled in, and landowners no longer enrolled in the program. One question related to why they wanted to enroll in the program. We asked them to rank eight options. The following shows the overall ranking of the top three options for the three groups of landowners. Next to the overall ranking (in parentheses) is the number of landowners who indicated that option as their first choice.

- Landowners who want to enroll in the program (140 surveys sent, 50 returned)

  1st – Manage hunter activities (12).
  2nd – Monetary incentives (11).
  3rd – Manage hunter numbers (6).

- Landowners enrolled in the program during the 1998 hunting season (307 surveys sent, 175 returned)

  1st – Manage hunter activities (32).
  2nd – Monetary incentives (30).
  3rd – Manage hunter numbers (22).

- Landowners no longer enrolled in the program (121 surveys sent, 61 returned)

  1st – Monetary incentives (16).
  2nd – Manage hunter activities (8).
  3rd – Manage hunter numbers(6).

Why No Longer Enrolled

We also asked the 121 landowners no longer enrolled in the program why they did not re-enroll to determine if the reasons for enrolling were not met. The following shows the top four reasons the 61 responding landowners did not re-enroll in the program:

27 Monetary incentives were not enough to compensate for hunter impacts.

23 Too many disruptions by hunters.

20 Too many hunters.

20 Block Management Program was not what I expected. Reasons included:

- 5 - Compensation differed from contract or went down.
- 3 – Hunters expected to be able to hunt – they thought they owned the land.
- 2 – Not enough/wrong sex deer taken.
- 1 – Signing up hunters too disruptive to overall farm operations.
- 1 – More hunters were calling than anticipated.

Exploring Options

Section 87-1-267(5), MCA, indicates benefits are to be provided *"to offset potential impacts associated with public hunting access, including but not limited to those associated with general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, liability insurance, roads, fences and parking area maintenance"* (emphasis added). Section 87-1-266, MCA, allows the department to provide one sportsman license to resident landowners, and non-residents can receive a non-resident big game combination license. These statutes would seem to preclude most forms of other benefits, such as tags/permits, different hunting licenses, preference points in the drawing system, etc., without a statutory change since they do not offset impacts.

Section 87-1-267(6)(d), MCA, states "The department may provide assistance in the construction and maintenance of roads, gates, and parking facilities and in the signing of property." In reviewing minutes from HB 195 testimony, the intent of this statute was to provide money for the items listed, not necessarily the items themselves. Although testimony indicates assistance is to be in the form of money, the statute does not preclude the department from supplying materials and labor.

Rules mention a number of items as various forms of compensation. These include department oversight and supervision of hunting on a BMA, supplying permission books or other materials which document hunter use, money, livestock loss insurance, wildlife game damage materials and supplies, and participation in other department cooperative programs. All but the last item are benefits that offset potential or actual impacts associated with public hunting. Assuming the last item pertains to the Habitat Montana Program and the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program, participation in those programs does not offset potential or actual impacts. The department uses block management to build a relationship with landowners so they might participate in those programs, but technically the programs do not offset hunter impacts.

Based upon comments from staff and landowners, it seems providing benefits other than compensation would be a program enhancement which allows the department to enroll more land into the program.

However, if the department decides to provide benefits such as additional licenses, special drawing permits/tags, preference points, etc., legislation will have to be enacted since current statute only seems to allow benefits in the form of compensation, gates, signs, etc. If the types of benefits are expanded, administrative impacts (signing, patrolling, paperwork in the regional office) will have to be reviewed to determine if resources are available to allow the program to grow.

The department agreed it may take statutory changes to provide desired types of non-monetary compensation. Both the Block Management Working Group and the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council intend to address this issue and offer recommendations.

Recommendation #5
We recommend department officials explore options for the Block Management Program to provide benefits to landowners other than money and a single resident sportsman license or non-resident big game combination license.

Contract Amounts Which do not Fluctuate Every Year

The current system requires regional staff to determine the actual number of hunter days on each BMA at the end of every hunting season. If the amount did not fluctuate more than 20 percent from the previous season, the landowner is paid the same amount the next year. If the amount went up or down, the payment is adjusted accordingly. Using this system, the department does not know from one year to the next how much it is going to have to pay landowners. Two regions have had to "borrow" money from other regions to pay for their contracts. Region 6 contributed approximately $9,000 to Regions 4 and 5 each of the last two years to help the regions pay their landowners in the program.

Field staff are not happy with the annual system and many suggested a base contract amount with a longer contract term be used. That way the landowner would know how much he/she would be getting each year for a number of years, and the department/regions could budget better in a biennium. Over a number of years a base contract

amount would take into consideration game population fluctuations, the number of licenses issued, and quotas.

The contract could be for 2, 4, or 6 years to coincide with the appropriation process. This will allow the department and regions to budget the payments to landowners. This process can be done in conjunction with a payment system based on impacts.

Staff also indicated that if the system is changed to longer contract terms, they still want permission slips or other means to track hunters each year. Hunter numbers would still be determined.

A longer term contract might not be appropriate for every landowner, but there are many landowners who have been in the program for a number of years. Over one-third of the landowners in the program in 1998 enrolled between 1975 and 1995. These landowners are candidates for a longer term contract based on their history in the program.

Department staff indicated with the extension of program authorization granted under SB 338, the department expects to negotiate a limited number of long-term block management contracts beginning with the 2000 hunting season.

Recommendation #6

We recommend the department develop a system where contracts can be established for terms of more than one year.

Compensation for Landowners in Aggregate Block Management Areas

Landowners in aggregate (multi-landowner) BMAs are not compensated in the same way as those in single BMAs. Every landowner in an aggregate BMA receives the basic enrollment fee of $250 but the impact payments do not reflect actual hunter days. Landowners in aggregate BMAs must divide the number of hunter days among all the landowners. For example, if four landowners are in an aggregate BMA and there are 100 hunter days, each of the four receives $250 instead of $1,000 each. In other cases landowners are paid a percentage of the hunter days based on the percent of land

they enroll in the aggregate BMA. So someone with ten percent of the land would get ten percent of the total payment, while someone with 50 percent of the land receives 50 percent of the total payment. In 1998 there were about 270 landowners in 64 aggregate BMAs in five regions. Two regions do not have any aggregate BMAs.

Aggregate BMAs help the department manage hunters, wildlife and habitat. Because more land is involved, game numbers can be better controlled using a defined management goal. Hunters have a uniform set of rules for all the land in the aggregate BMA instead of different rules for each landowner. Aggregate areas also cause hunters to disperse more than separate areas.

Our sample of landowners in the program and landowners who want to enroll were asked what would encourage them to join an aggregate BMA. Results of both surveys showed the majority of respondents wanted a compensation system that encourages blocking of lands.

Regional staff are aware of the problem and one addressed it by giving landowners in aggregate BMAs a 20 percent bonus to each landowner. Other possible options could include providing landowners in aggregate BMAs additional benefits not provided to other landowners. These benefits could include weed control, gates, additional patrolling, more licenses, etc., as discussed previously. Landowners not in aggregates could receive the additional benefits also, but it would reduce the contract amount by the cost of the benefit.

When the compensation system was established in 1996, inequities in compensation for landowners in aggregate BMAs was not considered. Department staff indicated several regions are experimenting with various types of incentives designed to encourage landowners to enroll in aggregate BMAs. The department needs to develop a system that is acceptable to all regions so there is consistency across the state for compensating landowners in aggregate BMAs.

The department indicated the Block Management Working Group will discuss and make recommendations regarding this issue.

Recommendation #7

We recommend the department develop a compensation system that rewards landowners for entering into an aggregate Block Management Area.

Documentation of Enrollment and Re-enrollment of Landowners

When the program enlarged in 1996, the first landowners enrolled were the ones already in the program. New enrollees were at the discretion of the wardens and biologists. We were told there were some landowners who should not have been enrolled because the area does not provide habitat or wildlife needed to meet program enrollment criteria. In 1998 a department committee developed a regional enrollment process and criteria. Each region was to:

1. Develop an inter-divisional committee to make enrollment decision recommendations.
2. Select criteria of highest priority for that region.
3. Evaluate existing landowners on a YES/NO basis to determine whether or not they will be automatically re-enrolled.
4. Rank numerically all new enrollment candidates and existing landowners who receive a NO designation for automatic re-enrollment.
5. Decide regional enrollment using the "scores" to prioritize candidates.
6. Document all ranking.
7. Document the rationale used to make enrollment decisions if several candidates receive equivalent ranking scores.

Enrollment criteria included items pertaining to wildlife management, hunter opportunity, landowner relations, administrative accountability, and participant education/stewardship. The list for criteria follows the rules for participation. Regions were

given the ability to pick and choose the criteria most important to the region.

Some regions developed forms for the 1998 enrollment and re-enrollment which followed the enrollment criteria developed by the internal committee. The forms include criteria for enrollment which are applicable to the region.

However, only one region actually used the forms to determine who should be re-enrolled or if they should be enrolled for the first time. The other regions did not use either the re-enrollment or new enrollment forms. In the latter case, some regions did not have money to enroll new cooperators.

Currently, the enrollment and re-enrollment process does not ensure participation criteria is followed due to the lack of documentation for the process followed in most regions. This documentation issue should be corrected prior to enrollment of more land. Staff commented there were no formal criteria to follow in 1996 to determine who should be enrolled. As a result, they believe there was some land enrolled that should not be in the program.

The 1999 Legislature increased the price of non-resident bird licenses, with the extra money going to block management to enroll more land. Without a more formal process to review and document new landowners that are enrolled or current landowners that are re-enrolled, the department has no method to justify its decisions to landowners and hunters for including specific areas in the Block Management Program.

Department staff indicated they anticipate a standardized system for enrollment and re-enrollment of landowners will be implemented state-wide prior to the 2001 hunting season.

Recommendation #8

We recommend the department ensure Block Management Coordinators justify and document the enrollment of new landowners or the re-enrollment of current landowners in the Block Management Program.

Program Accountability

After the 1996 hunting season the department found there were many permission slips submitted by landowners for 5 to 10 day periods, and the resulting payments were much higher than the estimates on the contracts. As a result, an internal committee developed policies for the regions to follow in regards to compensation and number of hunter days. Policies state that if actual hunter use deviates 20 percent or more from the contract amount, the next year's contract will reflect a change by adjusting the negotiated fixed sum. Permission slips now credit no more than three hunter days per hunter, unless more actual use is documented through daily sign-in rosters or some other method. Policies also stated immediate family members of the cooperator will not count toward hunter use totals on the family BMA. Immediate family members were defined in the 1998 policies.

As a result of these policies, each region established a method to review permission slips and rosters, and document use. Each region created a form(s) to document the number of hunter days for each area and if the number changed by 20 percent. As to what triggers an "audit" is up to the region. For example, Region 2 has areas that issue permission slips for the entire season so all those areas are audited. The region will call 20 to 25 percent of the hunters and extrapolate the data. Another region will look at the average number of hunter days per hunter and if it is above a certain amount, the area is audited. In a third region the trigger is if over 50 percent of the permission slips are written for multiple days. All regions use 25 percent as the minimum number of hunters to call. All the regions used the method for the 1997 hunting season and adjusted payments on some areas, either up or down.

Conclusion: Policies and Procedures Provide Program Accountability

Due to concerns about landowners issuing permission slips to hunters for multiple days when they only hunted one day, family members counted as a hunter day on the family ranch, etc., the department created policies to make the program more accountable. Each region created the forms and process it would use to meet policy requirements. As a result the process is fairly standard and

regions are consistent in their use of surveys. The policies and procedures followed provide program accountability.

Outfitting on BMAs

Statute does not allow land for inclusion in the program if outfitting or commercial hunting restricts public hunting opportunities. Rules state outfitting may not take place on a BMA unless public recreation and hunting opportunities are not restricted and the landowner and regional supervisor approve the activity. We reviewed department and Board of Outfitters and Guides information to determine how many BMAs have outfitters use them, how much the BMAs were used, and if the outfitters had permission to use the land.

FWP Outfitter Use Documentation

In 1996, there was no formal documentation of an outfitter using a BMA. In 1997, the outfitter, landowner and regional supervisor had to sign an Outfitting Approval Form. This form showed who was outfitting on the BMA, what conditions the outfitter had to follow, and the season the permission was in effect. Thirty-one BMAs had outfitters on them in 1997. Two outfitters had permission to take clients on their own land. Landowners were not required to report outfitter use on their lands after the 1997 hunting season.

In 1998 the Outfitters Approval Form was modified to show what species and sex the outfitter was hunting, the maximum number of clients the outfitter would take on the land, the number of outfitting days, and the number of hunter days. After the season, the landowners had to complete and sign a form stating how many animals the outfitter's clients killed, how many clients the outfitter took on the land, the number of outfitted hunter days, and the number of days outfitted hunting occurred. Outfitting was allowed on 19 BMAs in 1998. Nine outfitters had permission to use one to four BMAs. Two outfitters had permission to take clients on their own land. Outfitters took 78 clients on 10 BMAs for a total of 64 outfitted days, and 149 hunter days. Three birds, three antelope, eight deer and one elk were killed by outfitted hunters on BMAs.

The following table shows the number of BMAs outfitters had permission to hunt on, total acres in the BMA, hunter days, and outfitted information for the 1998 season. Each letter represents a different outfitter.

Table 14
Outfitting Information on BMAs
(1998 Hunting Season)

Region	Outfitter	Total Acres	BMA Hunter Days	Outfitted Hunters	Outfitted Hunter Days
2	A*1	600	42	0	0
4	B*	12,600	350	1	2
5	C*	3,920	146	0	0
	C*	2,170	144	0	0
	D	2,300	270	0	0
	B*	28,250	224	7	10
	C*	1,325	222	0	0
	E	3,400	204	5	10
6	F	7,000	341	1	2
	G*1	6,320	1,384	0	0
	G*	4,000	1,384	0	0
	F	6,960	341	1	2
	H*	3,000	212	11	14
	H*	38,000	616	15	30
	H*	8,500	616	2	8
	F*, G, I*	1,714	88	0	0
	H*	13,400	518	31	62
	F*, G, I*	21,758	1,048	4	9
Total		165,217	8,150	78	149

* - These areas are outfitted by the same outfitters in 1999.
1 - Outfitter owns the land in the BMA on which he is outfitting.

Source: **Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from department records.**

The same two forms are required in 1999. Eight outfitters have permission to use 15 BMAs in 1999.

In reviewing the Board of Outfitters files, we found five of the outfitters had information in the files as to what lands they would outfit and the information agreed with the BMA files. One did not have any land use information, and from the information in two files, we could not tell exactly on what ranches they were outfitting. The last one did not show the BMA but that BMA is not going to be outfitted in 1999.

Conclusion

From the information available, it appears outfitting on BMAs is following block management statute and rules. In most cases, few outfitters actually outfit on the BMAs, although they have permission to have clients hunt the BMAs.

Chapter V - Block Management Efficiency

Introduction

The last area of the Block Management Program we reviewed was operational efficiency. We examined communication with landowners, hunters and department staff, roles of regional staff in the program, and best practices.

Communication With Landowners and Hunters

Communication is an integral way for the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to promote landowner/sportsperson relations. One of the major means of communicating with landowners and hunters are the regional tabloids and individual Block Management Area (BMA) maps. We wanted to know how easy it would be to obtain tabloids and maps and how easy both publications would be to read and understand.

We obtained the 1999 tabloids for Regions 2 through 7 at the main office in Helena. We obtained the Region 1 tabloid from the regional office. We called Regions 2, 3, 4, and 5 and requested maps. The tabloid for Region 6 indicated we could obtain maps from the landowners. Region 7's tabloid stated we needed to call the region and staff would give us names of landowners to contact. We called Region 7 to see if they would give us names and numbers, which they did. We did not call any landowners since we knew we would not be hunting and did not want to inconvenience the landowner.

The maps and tabloids we reviewed tended to be confusing and difficult to read. In most cases, information was confusing and there is little consistency in presenting it among the regions. The following sections outline the information we found inconsistent and confusing/difficult to read in the tabloids and maps.

Tabloid Information

Our review of the tabloid information included determining the location of what we considered pertinent information such as how and where to obtain maps and if directions for obtaining the information was clear, if information describing the individual BMA was clear and concise, if types of information presented were consistent among regions, if regional maps were easy to read, etc. We found:

- There was no specific place or format in the tabloids describing how to obtain maps.
- One region indicated reservations had to be made through personal contact. We were not sure if "personal contact" meant via telephone or going to the landowner's door.
- One region indicated if you live in the town of the regional headquarters, you must go to the office to obtain maps. Staff will not mail maps to you. When we called an area office in another region they indicated we would have to come to the office to obtain maps. Staff would not mail them to us. The fact maps would not be mailed if you lived in the town of the area office was not included in the tabloid. We also called another area office in the same region and they sent us maps.
- One region had the wrong year in the tabloid.
- Two regions separate the maps in the tabloids by the counties in the regions. Other regions use hunting districts, while others have one map for the entire region. The map for one region was across a page break making it hard to read.
- One region had a number for a BMA on the map but not in the written description of the BMA.
- Some regional maps showed BMAs off the edge of the map so a reader was not sure where the BMAs are located in the region.
- Regions 4 and 5 both list two of the same BMAs in their tabloids. Region 5 indicates Region 4 administers the BMAs. The information on the BMAs in the two tabloids was not consistent.
- One of the regions did not list the BMAs in order. For example, BMA numbers 116 through 133 were listed between BMA 23 and 24. This made trying to find a description of the BMA difficult.
- Not all regions provide information, such as walk-in area only, hunter numbers limited, etc. in the additional information column. This information could help a hunter determine if he/she wants to hunt that BMA.
- Some regions specify the kind of deer (mule deer or whitetail) and upland game bird species that are huntable on the BMA,

while other regions do not specify the species. Specifying the species of deer and upland birds available for hunting would help hunters make a decision to hunt the area or not.

Map Information

Our review of the maps concentrated on ease of reading. Maps contain information about how to obtain access to the specific BMA, length of season the BMA is open, huntable species on the land, and where the BMA is located. If maps are not easy to read hunters will not understand their responsibilities for gaining permission to hunt the area, or might not even find the area. The following describes the information we found confusing/inconsistent pertaining to maps.

- Some regions write specific BMA information/rules as separate items in concise language or formatted in columns for ease of reading, whereas others use less concise sentences or paragraphs to describe BMA information/rules.

- Some maps were very "busy" so it was hard to find reference points (towns, highways, etc.) and the BMA was a very small part of the map. Other maps showed the BMA as a major part of the map with major landmarks detailed. The latter maps were much easier to read and to find the BMA.

- Some maps did not show the location of the headquarters.

- One map for an aggregate area of four ranches had different rules for three of the ranches. Waterfowl was a huntable species, but the rules did not state how a hunter obtained permission for waterfowl hunting. The map and rules were very hard to read and were confusing.

- If state land was included in the BMA, maps indicated a State Land Permit was needed. The wording describing the need for the permit was confusing because in some cases it sounded like a hunter needed a State Land Permit to hunt the private land in the BMA.

- Some maps did not include a legend showing the ownership of lands so a hunter would not know if a State Land Permit would be needed or not.

- Some maps have the number of the BMA on it, others do not. Having the number on the map helps locate the area on the regional map and in the description portion of the tabloid.

- A BMA in one region was to be included on the map in another region and the information was not included on the map.

Terminology

Terminology for basically the same things is not consistent within tabloids and between tabloids and maps. For example, in five regions we found nine different terms for roster box. The wording for the type of permission required is also not consistent even within a region. Written permission is not defined in most tabloids. A hunter new to the program might not know written permission consists of a fairly simple permission slip.

Summary

These inconsistencies and problems noted happened for a number of reasons. Prior to House Bill 195 each region had some sort of Block Management Program in place. Each region created a program that fit the needs of individual landowners. There were no regional tabloids or maps showing where management areas were.

When House Bill 195 was passed in 1996 each region was told to develop a hunter enhancement program. In most cases the regions just took what they had and enlarged it within the laws and rules of the new program. As a result there are seven different methods to communicate the program to the hunters. After the 1997 hunting season, Helena staff developed a standard table format for the individual BMA information in the tabloids and produced the tabloids on newsprint paper. That made finding the BMA information in the tabloid much easier. Now the regional and Helena staff can work on other areas of the tabloids and maps to enhance the ways they present the same basic information.

To correct some of the problems found, the department/regions should have an independent review of the tabloids and maps to ensure wording is consistent and at a comprehensible level. The Block Management Coordinators should agree to present some of the "common" information in the tabloids and on the maps in a consistent/standard manner.

The department indicated that the Block Management Working Group is reviewing program materials and developing recommendations regarding information dissemination.

Recommendation #9

We recommend the department/regions initiate a process to review tabloid and map information to make information more consistent/standard and easier to understand.

Locating BMAs

In cases where no permission is required to hunt a BMA, or permission is granted by the landowner someplace on the BMA, maps provided by the regions are the only means a hunter has to find the BMA. We used some of the maps received from the regions to try to locate BMAs. The BMAs did not require permission to hunt so we did not have any reason to call the landowner for directions to the BMA. We found:

- A BMA was not signed for the method to obtain permission as described on the map. The ranch had a roster box located at the entrance. The map said permission was needed to hunt the area. There was no mention of signing in at a roster box on the map. There was no information at the entrance as to how to obtain permission.

- We could not find one BMA. The map indicated you needed permission to hunt and reservations to hunt birds. All other hunting is first come first serve. The map showed a road with a name on which to turn. None of the roads in the general area of the BMA had road names so we did not know which road to turn onto. When bird hunters called for reservations they could get directions, but other hunters would not need to call so they would not get directions.

- One BMA had two parking areas indicated. We could only find one.

- The map for one BMA did not have a designated parking area shown on the map. There were also no signs on the main road indicating when you were entering or leaving the BMA.

If hunters cannot find a BMA they would like to hunt, they are going to be dissatisfied with the program.

Many of the regions rely on the landowners to sign their property. The signing is not checked by a department employee to ensure

Many of the regions rely on the landowners to sign their property. The signing is not checked by a department employee to ensure signing is complete and correct. Many biologists and wardens are in the field and they could verify the signing is correct. Also, many regions hire patrollers to visit BMAs and they could also ensure signing is correct.

Recommendation #10

We recommend the department ensure the directions on the Block Management Area maps can be followed and the areas are properly signed prior to the hunting season.

Landowner and Hunter Knowledge of the Program

We sent a questionnaire to hunters and to landowners who have not expressed an interest in enrolling in the program. We found some hunters and landowners did not know about the program. Hunters also had problems with the availability of tabloids and maps. The following discusses our findings.

Hunter Comments

We asked hunters if they were aware of the Block Management Program, and if they were, did they hunt on a BMA in 1998. We sent questionnaires to 300 hunters and 119 responded. Nine said they had not heard of the program. Seven of the hunters were from Montana and two were from out-of-state.

Sixty-nine hunters said they hunted on a BMA in 1998. We asked hunters using a BMA if they were satisfied with the availability of tabloids and maps. Two of the 69 did not respond to the question. Of the 67 that answered, 17 (25 percent) said they were not happy with the availability of tabloids and/or maps. Comments ranged from could not find any maps and the maps were not adequate, to where do you get state maps. A comment was made about the general availability: "The requirement of phoning the FWP administrative/regional office and being limited to three (3) maps, when you haven't hunted there before and have no idea as to what species is/are available, is a cumbersome "by guess and by gosh" way of doing it. There should be some sort of statewide "master guidebook" available." (No specific region identified.)

Landowner Comments

We sent questionnaires to 278 landowners that have not expressed an interest in enrolling in the Block Management Program. We received responses from 88. Nine of the 88 (10 percent) said they never heard of the program.

Summary

The department does not have a process to easily inform the public, hunters or landowners about the program. There is no general information about the program at license dealers or other public places that deal with hunters and landowners.

The legislature created a program to provide access to hunters. By not providing general information about the program and how the program varies between regions, the department is not fully promoting partnerships between landowners, hunters and FWP as stated in the Block Management Program mission statement.

Recommendation #11
We recommend the department help promote landowner/sportsman partnerships by developing a process to easily and broadly explain the Block Management Program and how it works in each region.

Role of Staff in the Program

We reviewed the roles of field staff, particularly coordinators, wardens, and biologists in the Block Management Program. The role of biologists and wardens varies by region. In some regions biologists and wardens negotiate block management contracts with landowners in their area of responsibility. In other regions biologists and wardens have virtually no block management responsibilities. The following sections discuss our findings and recommendations.

Role of Biologists and Wardens

Region 1 biologists act as advisors to the Block Management Coordinator for private land and wardens spend the majority of their block management time on corporate land since most of the land in block management is corporate. There are 11 private cooperators. The department signed a five year agreement with a corporation stating the land would be open to public hunting if there was a department presence on the land. As a result, there is a great deal of warden activity on corporate land. Two other corporate landowners agreed to the same arrangement for the 1996, 1997 and 1998 hunting seasons, thus requiring an increased warden presence.

Region 2 biologists and wardens have a minimal role in block management. Both groups are advisors to the Block Management Coordinator in terms of recommending new areas, etc. The wardens also patrol the areas. None of the biologists or wardens are involved in the contract process or any year-end paperwork. The landowners, Block Management Coordinator, and patrollers install the block management signs on the property.

Regions 3, 5, 6, and 7 all have biologists and wardens negotiate terms and dollar amounts of new contracts and renew current contracts. Wardens and biologists are generally the primary block management contact people for landowners. The person installing signs and making maps varies between the regions. In some cases landowners are responsible for installing signs, in others biologists, wardens or patrollers install signs on the areas. The Block Management Coordinator usually makes the maps but in some cases biologists will help or make the maps for the BMAs for which they are responsible. Generally the biologists and wardens are not involved in the year-end paperwork.

Region 4 is similar to Region 2 in that biologists and wardens are advisors to the Block Management Coordinator. Wardens also patrol the areas. Biologists and wardens do not complete any paperwork. Landowners are responsible for installing block management signs.

Staff in Regions 3, 5, 6, and 7 generally agreed the Block Management Program takes time, but they like the fact they have

one on one contact with landowners. Many also commented that the contract work decreases the ability to complete their field work, such as survey and inventory of game populations which is used to determine harvest quotas. Regional management structured the program in these regions so biologists and wardens are involved and would have landowner contact.

Role of the Block Management Coordinators Could Be More Efficient

Based on comments and observations made during the audit we are not sure biologists and wardens are aware of all the nuances of the Block Management Program. In one example, we asked biologists and wardens if they recommended rest days to landowners. Rest days entail curtailing hunting on the BMA for a few days each week to allow the animals to hopefully come back into the area. Responses ranged from "suggesting to all landowners they put some limit on the area" to the staff who "would not enroll a landowner that wanted rest days because the landowner would not be providing the hunting opportunity." Overall, our observations suggest that a block management process as used in Region 2 provides a more efficient approach. It allows for consistency in negotiation and renewal. It maintains the warden and biologist contacts as part of their overall roles in enforcement and wildlife management, leaving the administration of block management to the coordinator. Having the Block Management Coordinator be the primary contact person for negotiating new and renewal contracts, as is done in Region 2, leads to more consistency in the region and in the program.

Summary

Having biologists and wardens negotiate contracts leads to inconsistencies in information given the landowners. These biologists and wardens are then also responsible for the administration of the contract process. If the Block Management Coordinator in each region is the only person responsible for contract administration, all landowners in the region should be provided the same information. The biologists and wardens are still responsible for maintaining contact with the landowners to determine the status of the resource (wildlife and habitat).

Recommendation #12

We recommend the Block Management Coordinator in each region be responsible for contract administration and sign installation for the Block Management Program.

Improvements in Operating Efficiency

During our review of the Block Management Program, we identified some areas where Block Management Coordinators could improve the overall efficiency of operations. At the beginning of the program, each region developed its own approach to administer the program. Now is the time to review the procedures to determine the most efficient methods. There are a lot of good ideas regarding how to gather the same kinds of information and provide information to landowners in the various regions. This information should be shared among the Block Management Coordinators. The following section describes our findings and recommendations.

Efficiency Improvements

When discussing the Block Management Program with regional staff, and reviewing documentation from Block Management Coordinators and annual reports, we noted a number of activities occurring in some regions that would be helpful in other regions. These included:

- Post season BMA evaluations. Soon after general rifle season the Block Management Coordinator and patrollers discuss the BMAs visited during the season to determine what, if any, changes are needed for the next season.
- A form for prospective landowners to complete so the region knows who is interested, the species available, if the land is currently open to hunting, how many hunters are allowed during the season, acres, and if outfitting is currently occurring on the land.
- A pre-enrollment letter sent in the spring to landowners with notice of the compensation amount.

- A daily work journal, BMA patrol log, permission slip log, and weekly report forms completed by patrollers to record their activities.

- A one-day session so patrollers are aware of potentially dangerous or questionable situations and know what to look for in terms of violations.

- A comment sheet sent/presented with the contract so the landowner can write down anything about the season when it happens.

- A sign with "Open" on one side and "Sorry We're Full" on the other side. The sign hangs below the BMA sign.

- The plywood sheets used for roster boxes cut at the lumber company instead of by FWP employees to increase the speed of construction.

Many of the items mentioned above, and a number of others, are included in the annual reports each coordinator writes and sends to Helena. The reports also contain forms used for hunter day tabulation and post-season surveys, letters sent to landowners, etc. The coordinators could send the reports, forms, computer spreadsheets, letters, etc., they use that are not in the reports to their fellow coordinators when the reports are sent to Helena. The other coordinators could see how other regions deal with some of the same problems, reporting requirements, and situations. Streamlining and coordination between regions would likely occur.

Recommendation #13

We recommend the department increase coordination among the regions by:

A. Establishing a process that ensures Block Management Coordinators review other region's annual reports and documentation.

B. Establishing a forum to discuss the various methods for completing the same or similar block management tasks.

Compiling Information Using a Computer

A number of regions use computers and various software packages to compile block management information. This includes contract information which is input into a computer in Helena and in each region. There does not seem to be any standard format or software used in the regions and Helena. If the coordinators and Helena staff discussed and agreed to a format for contracts, Helena staff would not have to input the information. Staff in Helena could verify the information input by the regions is correct, and then consolidate the field's information into a format needed for their use. An agreed to format would allow the regions to compile the statistics they need and Helena could compile the statistics it needs without information being input twice.

If the regions agreed to a format and software for permission slip/roster information, other regions could access the information. Possible uses include comparing use of BMAs by specific hunters if needed, sending surveys to hunters that use BMAs, and possibly tracking specific people game wardens are investigating.

Recommendation #14
We recommend the Block Management Coordinators and Helena staff:

A. Use the same software for contract and permission slip/ roster information.

B. Develop a common format for contract and permission slip/roster information so information only needs to be input once and can be used by all the regions and Helena.

Summary

Since the first hunting season under the enhanced program, the department has developed a more streamlined, efficient, and accountable Block Management Program. The BMA information in each tabloid is now in a standard table format, there is a list of standardized signs instead of a large number of different signs, the contract used to enroll landowners is much shorter, the contract for landowners re-enrolling in the program is now one page, guidelines were written concerning program use accountability, and outfitter

use is now documented. We believe the issues we discuss in this chapter will help the program become even more efficient and accountable.

Chapter VI - Conclusion

Introduction

Block Management was formally created in 1985, although the program existed in some regions since the 1970s. The program was started in response to landowners' concerns about the number of hunters, damage to their land, and the time it took the landowner to deal with hunters. In 1995 the legislature created the enhanced Block Management Program in response to concerns expressed by landowners, hunters, and outfitters during the 1993 Legislative Session. The enhanced program was designed to reduce conflicts between landowners and hunters by providing tangible benefits to landowners who allowed free public hunting. Compensation was the primary tangible benefit provided landowners.

Some Additional Land was Opened to Public Hunting

One of the goals of the enhanced program was to open more private land for free public hunting. We found over one-third of the landowners enrolled in the program in 1996 were already participating in block management, some since 1975. Many of the regional staff acknowledged the enhanced program caused land that was open to public hunting to remain open. A few staff thought the program opened some land that had limited or no public hunting prior to the enhanced program.

Our survey results of landowners in the program showed the goal of opening land to free public hunting was accomplished to a certain extent. Of the 175 respondents to our survey of 307 landowners in the program, 113 indicated their land was open to public hunting when they enrolled in the program. Survey results show a total of 242,939 acres were opened up to general public hunting that were closed or had limited hunting prior to enrollment.

Program Tangible Benefits

Funding for landowner compensation is derived from market-based outfitter-sponsored non-resident deer and elk combination licenses. Because funding is limited to one source, and the tangible benefits provided are money and one sportsman license, the program has not grown since 1996. Most regions have a waiting list of landowners who are interested in enrolling in the program. Based on survey results and conversations with field staff, some landowners would be willing to enroll in the program and not receive compensation. Instead they would like to receive various hunting

licenses/tags/permits, gates, fences, or weed control. It appears, if the department provided benefits other than compensation more land could be enrolled in the program.

Another alternative to expand the program is to develop an additional funding source. We surveyed a sample of hunters to determine if they would be willing to pay for the Block Management Program. We sent 294 surveys and received 122 responses. Seventy-one said they hunted on a BMA in 1998. Forty-seven of the seventy-one indicated they would be willing to pay for the program if the money is used to enroll more land into the program. Another 20 of the 71 indicated they would not be willing to pay. Four did not answer the question. An additional 42 hunters said they were aware of the program but did not hunt on a BMA in 1998. Twenty-four of the forty-two said they would be willing to pay for the program and nine said they would not be willing to pay for the program. Nine did not answer the question. Nine hunters said they had not heard of the program; six would pay for it and three said they would not pay for the program. Generally it appears hunters would be willing to contribute some amount to enroll more land in the Block Management Program.

Conclusion

Overall, it appears the enhanced Block Management Program opened some previously closed land to free public hunting. In this regard it is meeting one of its goals. If alternative forms of compensation to landowners are created, it appears more land could be enrolled in the program. If hunters contributed to the program, additional land could also be enrolled.

Agency Response

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

P.O.Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-3186
FAX:406-444-4952
Ref:DO1109-99
November 24, 1999

NOV 24 1999

Scott Seacat
Legislative Audit Division
PO Box 201705
Helena, MT 59620-1705

Dear Scott:

We have received the performance audit report on the Block Management Program. Your thoroughness and constructive recommendations for improvements to this program reflect a high degree of professionalism and a clear understanding of this evolving and complex program. Thank you for your efforts.

The current Block Management Program has only been in place for four hunting seasons. The program was developed and has been implemented during a period of dramatic economic hardship for the agricultural community. Consequently, there is a great deal of pressure on landowners—including those who have traditionally allowed public hunting access—to seek some form of compensation from hunting on their lands. Had the expanded Block Management Program not been in place in 1995, I believe far fewer landowners would have been attracted to the program. It is also clear that this program must continue to evolve as conditions change.

The Department's response to the recommendations follows:

Recommendation #1

We recommend the Department:

A. Create specific objectives that relate to the purpose and mission of the program.

B. Establish measurable criteria which relate directly to the goals and objectives, and develop strategies to allow for attaining desire results or outcomes.

Concur

The Department agrees that the development of more specific program goals, objectives, and strategies is important and a natural next step in the evolution of this program. We intend to integrate the goals and objectives of the block management program with the overall goals of the

broader wildlife program by using the framework of the wildlife program's strategic and six-year plans. The development of measurable criteria will be accomplished once the goals and objectives are clearly defined, utilizing the assistance of the Block Management Working Group (BMWG), a group of landowners, hunters, and FWP staff which I appointed in August, 1999 to advise the Department about how to improve this program. We expect to accomplish this task prior to the 2001 hunting season.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the Department develop methods to:

A. *Coordinate access provided under the Block Management Program, the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program, and Habitat Montana.*

B. *Publicize and monitor the hunting on conservation easements and the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program projects.*

Concur

The Department agrees that efforts to obtain access through various programs could be better coordinated to improve program efficiency. At the same time, the Department recognizes that both the Habitat Montana and Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Programs (UGBHEP) are primarily habitat programs, with access provided either with reasonable use limitations (UGBHEP) or specific use limitations (Habitat Montana). While many of the habitat projects are also currently enrolled in the Block Management Program, some are not, and may not be suited for enrollment. However, the contracts for UGBHEP projects now require hunter use definitions, as do most Habitat Montana projects where hunter access is provided. Providing the public with information about these access opportunities is important to meeting both expectation and intent. The Department intends to coordinate efforts within those programs where public hunting access is obtained by the 2000 hunting season, and will provide the public with appropriate information about these programs by the 2001 hunting season.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the Department establish an access coordination function.

Concur

With public access playing an increasingly important role in the Department's ability to fulfill its mission, the coordination of programs and activities involving public access is of utmost importance. The 1999 Legislature approved our request to create a staff position specifically associated with access. While the duties of this position will primarily relate to public land hunting access issues, the coordination of all programs involving public hunting access will take place prior to the 2000 hunting season.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the department re-evaluate the current base payment system used to compensate landowners enrolled in the block management program.

Concur

The Department agrees that the current system used to compensate landowners in the program can be improved. The Block Management Working Group (BMWG) is expected to report to the Department by the summer of 2000 with their recommendations for improving the current system. The Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Council is also expected to provide input about this aspect of the program. For example, the current system provides an incentive for quantity over quality of hunting opportunity. Ultimately, it may be determined that the current statutes requiring that compensation be based only on potential impacts are not adequate or flexible enough to meet access demands throughout the state. If this is the case, the Department, or the PL/PW Council, may need to seek statutory changes.

Recommendation #5

We recommend department officials explore options for the block Management Program to provide benefits to landowners other than money and a single resident sportsman license or non-resident big game combination license.

Concur.

Both the Block Management Working Group (BMWG) and the Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Group are exploring these options, and based upon their recommendations, either legislation or FWP Commission rule changes may be pursued to achieve this goal.

Recommendation #6

We recommend the department develop a system where contracts can be established for terms of more than one year.

Concur.

Current rules allow for block management contract periods of up to five years, and with the extension of the program's sunset provisions to March 1, 2006, and subsequent stabilization of the program's funding, the Department will begin negotiating multi-year contracts with some block management cooperators beginning with the 2000 hunting season. This needs to be balanced with the need to re-evaluate on an annual basis including the best properties in the program.

Recommendation #7

We recommend the department develop a compensation system that rewards landowners for entering into an aggregate BMA.

Concur.

The Block Management Working Group (BMWG) is expected to develop recommendations regarding this issue and report to the Department by mid-summer, 2000. In the interim, the Department will continue to explore options for encouraging and rewarding those landowners who choose to enroll in cooperative blockings of land (aggregate BMAs).

Recommendation #8

We recommend the department ensure block management coordinators justify and document the enrollment of new landowners or the re-enrollment of current landowners in the Block management Program.

Concur.

As noted in your report, a system for enrollment justification has been developed by program staff and was implemented for the 1999 hunting season. Adequate documentation of this system will be accomplished for the 2000 hunting season, with any program expansion that might occur through new funding being documented under, and subjected to, the provisions of this system.

Recommendation #9

We recommend the department/regions initiate a process to review tabloid and map information to make the information more consistent/standard and easier to read.

Concur.

The Block Management Working Group (BMWG) is expected to report to the Department by mid-summer, 2000, with their recommendations about how to improve this aspect of the program. Additionally, program staff reviews program materials every year following the close of hunting season, sharing input from hunters, landowners, and FWP staff about how to improve existing materials and making changes prior to publication of materials for the following season.

Recommendation #10

We recommend the department ensure the directions on the BMA maps can be followed and the areas are properly signed prior to hunting season.

Concur.

The Block Management Working Group (BMWG) is expected to report to the Department by mid-summer, 2000, with their recommendations about how to improve this aspect of the program. Additionally, input from program users provides ongoing opportunities to improve BMA maps and ensure proper signing of BMAs.

Recommendation #11

We recommend the department help promote landowner/sportsman partnerships by developing a process to easily and broadly explain the Block Management Program and how it works in each region.

Concur.

The Department is pleased that, of the people contacted in your surveys, 90% of the landowners not enrolled in the program and 93% of the hunters contacted knew about the Block Management Program. This seems to indicate that Department efforts to publicize the program are rather successful. The Department will continue to seek ways to better explain the program and highlight regional differences in the program to make it easier for hunters to use.

Recommendation #12

We recommend the Block Management Coordinator in each region be responsible for contract administration and sign installation for the Block Management Program.

Concur.

The Department agrees that it is important for all FWP employees to provide consistent and accurate information about the program. Using the regional block management coordinator to oversee the administration of contract forms can help improve program efficiency. In addition, the success of the Block Management Program and the Department's overall ability to perform its mission, relies upon the ability of local wardens and biologists to build relationships with area landowners. This allows them to negotiate block management contracts, develop localized hunter management plans, pursue cooperative wildlife management ideas, and creates the foundations for dealing with other issues that are important to a particular landowner. We will continue to strive toward improving the consistency of information disseminated by different members of our staff.

Recommendation #13

We recommend the department increase coordination among the regions by:

A. *Establishing a process that ensures block management coordinators review other regions' annual reports and documentation.*

B. *Establishing a forum to discuss the various methods for completing the same or similar block management tasks.*

Concur.

The Department agrees that regional staff benefits from sharing information among themselves. We currently hold periodic block management coordinators meetings to accomplish this goal. In addition, regional coordinators communicate among themselves throughout the year about program issues and ideas. We support the idea of preparing annual reports from all regions and to provide them to coordinators. We will begin this at the conclusion of the 1999 hunting season.

Recommendation #14

We recommend the block management coordinators and Helena staff:

A. *Use the same software for contract printing and permission slip/roster information.*

B. *Develop a common format for contracts and permission slip/roster information so information only needs to be input once and can be used by all the regions and Helena.*

Concur.

Upgrading equipment at the regional level is underway and the regional block management coordinators will be working with division staff during 2000 to develop a standard reporting format for contract information and post-season hunter use data.

Sincerely,

Pat Graham

Patrick J. Graham
Director

c: Alan Charles
Paul Sihler

Appendices

Appendix A

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

Hunters

294 Surveys sent
122 Surveys returned

Are you aware of the Block Management Program administered by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks? The program helps to provide hunters access to private land during bird and big game hunting seasons.

113 Yes 9 No (Go to question 9, page 3)

Did you hunt on a Block Management Area (BMA) during the 1998 hunting season?

71 Yes 42 No (Go to question 9, page 3)

For the next 7 questions, please indicate in what Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks regions you hunted on BMAs. (NOTE: Some respondents hunted in more than one region and some did not answer all the questions so the number of respondents does not always total 71.)

1. For what species did you hunt on the BMAs? (Check all that apply.)

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	7	11	25	9	8	22

30 Whitetail Deer
44 Mule Deer
23 Elk
21 Upland game birds
32 Antelope
5 Turkey
4 Waterfowl
1 Bear

2. Did you see any of the game animals/birds you were hunting on the BMAs?

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	7	11	23	8	9	21

77 Yes
4 No

3. Did you harvest any of the game animals/birds you were hunting on the BMAs.

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	7	11	24	7	9	21

53 Yes
27 No

4. What procedures did you use to register on the BMAs you hunted? (Check all that apply)

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	8	11	24	9	9	21

47 Permission slips
31 Sign-in rosters
6 Daily sign-in coupons
18 No permission required – walk-in area
7 Drawing quota

5. Were you satisfied with the registration procedures for hunting on the BMAs?

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	8	11	23	9	9	21

76 Yes
3 No

6. Were you satisfied with the availability of maps and booklets listing the BMAs in the region(s) in which you hunted?

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	8	10	23	9	9	21

57 Yes
22 No

7. Would you use the same BMAs again?

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
# Hunters	1	8	11	23	9	9	21

78 Yes
2 No

8. Would you use other BMAs?

66 Yes 2 No 1 Maybe

9. Would you be willing to pay for the BMA Program if the money is used to enroll more land into the program? Currently the program is funded through sales of outfitter sponsored non-resident big game and deer combination licenses.

88 Yes 33 No One did not answer

If yes, how would you prefer to contribute? (Rank the top four by placing 1 through 4 on the lines.)

Number who Ranked .

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
17	10	5	7	Have the department reallocate existing license fees to the program
32	12	6	4	BMA user fee
16	12	10	5	Increase in the conservation license fee
2	2	7	9	Increase in the sportsmen license fee
1	4	7	2	Increase in the upland game bird license fee
0	1	3	2	Increase in the waterfowl stamp fee
2	1	3	10	Increase in the big game licenses fees
6	7	5	3	Voluntary check-off on the state income tax return

How much would you be willing to contribute to the program? (Check one)

15 $1-2
8 $3-4
22 $5-6
0 $7-8
24 $9-10
14 More than $10. How much? $20 (2 respondents), $25 (5 respondents), $50-$100 (as much as some trespass fees), $100

10. Would you be willing to pay for a statewide listing of landowners participating in the program?

77 Yes (30 did not hunt on a BMA in 1998)
32 No (12 did not hunt on a BMA in 1998)

13 did not answer the question.

Appendix B

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

Landowners Enrolled in the Program During the 1998 Hunting Season

307 Surveys sent
175 Surveys returned

1. Was your land open to hunting prior to your enrollment in the Block Management Program administered by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks?

   161 Yes 11 No (Go to question 2) 3 No answer

   If yes, how did you manage hunting? (Check all that apply.)
   113 My land was open to hunting for the general public to use.
   68 I allowed relatives to hunt on my land.
   75 I allowed friends to hunt on my land.
   3 I charged a fee to individuals who wanted to hunt on my land.
   6 I leased my land to outfitters.
   1 I leased my land to a hunter/sportsmen group.

   One did not answer the question.

   If yes, approximately how many acres were available for hunting?
   777,589 Private acres?
   92,560 State School Trust land acres?
   163,549 BLM acres?
   29,630 US Forest Service acres?
   64,410 Other acres?

2. Why did you enroll in the Block Management Program? (Please rank the following from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked								
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
22	26	12	14	13	14	6	4	Manage hunter numbers
14	17	19	12	20	20	6	3	Manage wildlife
32	13	29	19	8	10	3	1	Manage hunter activities
0	15	13	11	16	22	29	6	Hunter management tools (signs, maps, etc.)
30	20	15	14	13	7	12	4	Monetary incentives
17	19	10	14	21	12	9	5	Liability protection
10	13	11	23	10	15	24	1	Continue/enhance the Montana tradition of public hunting on private land
5	2	0	2	0	0	2	6	Other

13 did not answer the question.
33 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

3. How would you have managed hunting on your land if you had not enrolled in the Block Management Program? (Check all that apply.)

64 I would have kept my land open to hunting for the general public to use.
34 I would have closed my land to public hunting.
86 I would have let friends hunt on my land.
78 I would have let relatives hunt on my land.
20 I would have charged a fee to individuals who wanted to hunt on my land.
21 I would have leased my land to outfitters.
17 I would have leased my land to a hunting/sportsmen group.
5 I would have closed my land to all hunting.

3 did not answer the question.

4. If the department develops a payment system based on factors other than hunter days, what factors do you think payment should be based upon? (Please rank the top 5 factors from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
42	19	12	9	9	Amount of land offered for enrollment
32	22	15	12	17	Number of potential hunters
10	7	5	11	12	Access to state and federal land
5	21	21	15	11	Length of season open to hunting
17	9	11	13	4	History of game damage problems
12	18	22	11	11	Type and quality of habitat
8	21	18	19	10	Species available for hunting
6	10	9	10	11	Opportunity to link with other block management areas
1	0	3	7	7	Opportunity to link with other FWP programs
0	3	1	5	6	FWP priorities for habitat
0	3	3	3	6	FWP priorities for wildlife
4	7	8	8	12	Hunter success rate
6	1	0	0	2	Other

13 did not answer the question.
18 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

5. If necessary, what factors would encourage you to become part of a multi-cooperator Block Management Area with you neighbors? (Please rank the top 4 factors from 1 to 4 with 1 being the most important.)

61 Am already enrolled in a multi-cooperator area. (Go to question 6)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
14	13	9	11	1	Increased patrols by FWP personnel
39	13	9	5	0	Payment system that encourages blocking of lands
11	19	18	13	0	Uniform maps and ranch rules for all the enrolled ranches
9	13	11	14	0	Increased hunter management by FWP (the department issues permission slips, reservations made through an answering service, etc.)
14	15	17	14	1	Cooperative game management goals developed with FWP and my neighbors
2	1	0	0	0	Other

16 did not answer the question.
7 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

6. If necessary, what would encourage you to limit the number of hunters on your land? (Please rank the top 4 factors from 1 to 4 with one being the most important.)

59 Already limit the number of hunters on my land. (Go to question 7)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
6	7	8	7	0	Increased patrols by FWP personnel
20	20	12	8	0	Payment based on something other than hunter days
10	10	12	10	1	Increased hunter management by FWP (the department issues permission slips, reservations made through an answering service, etc.)
33	13	10	12	0	Scarcity of game
15	28	14	4	0	Lack of sufficient room for safe hunting
3	6	10	13	1	Hunter management tools that allow hunters to self-limit themselves (parking areas with limited parking, roster sheets with limited space, etc.)
3	0	0	5	0	Other

8 did not answer the question.
15 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

7. Are you going to re-enroll in the Block Management Program if the department offers?

167 Yes 4 No 4 Maybe

If no, how will you manage hunting on your land? (Check all that apply)

0 I will have keep my land open to hunting for the general public to use.
2 I will close my land to public hunting.
0 I will let friends hunt on my land.
1 I will let relatives hunt on my land.
2 I will charge a fee to individuals who want to hunt on my land.
1 I will lease my land to outfitters.
1 I will lease my land to a hunting/sportsmen group.
0 I will close my land to all hunting.

Appendix C

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

Responses from Landowners No Longer Enrolled in the Program

121 Surveys sent
61 Surveys returned

1. Was your land open to hunting prior to your enrollment in the Block Management Program administered by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks?

   55 Yes 3 No (Go to question 2) 3 No answer

   If yes, how did you manage hunting? (Check all that apply.)
   40 My land was open to hunting for the general public to use.
   28 I allowed relatives to hunt on my land.
   31 I allowed friends to hunt on my land.
   4 I charged a fee to individuals who wanted to hunt on my land.
   1 I leased my land to outfitters.
   0 I leased my land to a hunter/sportsmen group.
   Other:
   - 8 – Required permission to hunt
   - 2 – Sold the land
   - 2 – Required the hunters to help on the ranch
   - 1 – Bought the land in '96 and not sure how managed prior to that
   - 1 – Outfitter who owns the ranch (open to public, friends and relatives)

   If yes, approximately how many acres were available for hunting?
   179,529 Private acres?
   20,440 State School Trust land acres?
   29,119 BLM acres?
   21,300 US Forest Service acres?

2. Why did you initially enroll in the Block Management Program? (Please rank the following from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked								
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
3	5	9	6	6	3	2	1	Manage hunter numbers
6	2	8	8	3	3	3	0	Manage wildlife
8	8	6	4	5	2	2	0	Manage hunter activities
0	4	4	5	5	6	6	0	Hunter management tools (signs, maps, etc.)
16	6	2	1	1	5	1	1	Monetary incentives
2	6	5	3	4	6	3	1	Liability protection
2	3	2	7	5	4	8	1	Continue/enhance the Montana tradition of public hunting on private land

6 did not answer the question.
16 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

3. Why are you no longer enrolled in the program? (Check all that apply.)

23 Too many disruptions by hunters.
20 Too many hunters.
4 Too much damage to my property by hunters.
9 Not patrolled enough by FWP employees.
27 Monetary incentives were not enough to compensate for hunter impacts.
5 Hunters were bagging too much game.
3 Hunters were not bagging enough game.
5 Block Management Program is too formal/structured.
8 No longer own the land.
20 Block Management Program was not what I expected.
22 The department dropped me from the program.
14 Other

4. If the department develops a payment system based on factors other than hunter days, what factors do you think payment should be based upon? (Please rank the top 5 factors from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
7	3	3	2	5	Amount of land offered for enrollment
3	5	4	6	1	Number of potential hunters
2	2	2	1	1	Access to state and federal land
1	6	2	5	6	Length of season open to hunting
8	2	4	1	2	History of game damage problems
3	7	5	5	3	Type and quality of habitat
3	4	7	6	5	Species available for hunting
1	4	1	0	2	Opportunity to link with other block management areas
0	0	1	2	1	Opportunity to link with other FWP programs
1	1	1	3	1	FWP priorities for habitat
1	1	3	1	2	FWP priorities for wildlife
8	2	3	2	2	Hunter success rate

14 did not answer the question.
8 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

5. How are you managing hunting on your land now that you are no longer enrolled in the program? (Check all that apply.)

20 My land is open to hunting for the general public to use.
5 My land is closed to public hunting.
28 I allow relatives to hunt on my land.
31 I allow friends to hunt on my land.
6 I charge a fee to individuals who wanted to hunt on my land.
7 I lease my land to outfitters.
5 I lease my land to a hunter/sportsmen group.
2 My land is closed to all hunting.

3 did not answer the question.

Appendix D

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

Landowners Expressing an Interest in Enrolling in the Program

140 Surveys sent
50 Surveys returned

1. Is your land open to hunting now?

45 Yes 4 No (Go to question 2) 1 No answer

If yes, how do you manage hunting? (Check all that apply)

28 My land is open to hunting for the general public to use.
26 I allow relatives to hunt on my land.
28 I allow friends to hunt on my land.
6 I charge a fee to individuals who want to hunt on my land.
3 I lease my land to outfitters.
1 I lease my land to a hunter/sportsmen group.

If yes, approximately how many acres are available for hunting?

169,402 Private acres?
12,300 State School Trust land acres?
27,100 BLM acres?
50,000 US Forest Service acres?
320 Other acres?

2. Why do you want to enroll in the Block Management Program administered by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks? (Please rank the following from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most important)

Number who Rank								
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
6	10	6	7	3	4	0	0	Manage hunter numbers
5	2	10	6	8	6	0	0	Manage wildlife
12	7	6	6	3	3	0	0	Manage hunter activities
2	1	3	4	5	9	10	0	Hunter management tools (signs, maps, etc.)
11	9	3	4	5	0	3	1	Monetary incentives
1	7	5	6	8	6	3	0	Liability protection
5	3	3	4	1	4	13	1	Continue/enhance the Montana tradition of public hunting on private land
2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	Other

One did not answer the question.
8 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

3. If enrolled, approximately how many acres would be available to hunters under the Block Management Program?

190,912	Private acres?
13,160	State School Trust land acres?
55,250	BLM acres?
50,000	US Forest Service acres?
320	Other acres?

If enrolled, what species would be available? (Check all that apply.)

42	Whitetail Deer	44	Mule Deer
15	Elk	37	Upland game birds
36	Antelope	10	Turkey
28	Waterfowl	5	Bear

Other - Coyotes, pheasant, fish

5. If the department develops a payment system based on factors other than hunter days, what factors do you think payment should be based upon? (Please rank the top 5 factors from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
13	10	1	3	5	Amount of land offered for enrollment
12	5	6	4	3	Number of potential hunters
2	1	2	5	2	Access to state and federal land
1	8	7	3	5	Length of season open to hunting
7	2	1	2	3	History of game damage problems
5	9	7	7	2	Type and quality of habitat
4	6	7	5	6	Species available for hunting
4	2	4	5	1	Opportunity to link with other block management areas
2	0	2	1	3	Opportunity to link with other FWP programs
1	1	1	2	2	FWP priorities for habitat
2	0	1	1	1	FWP priorities for wildlife
3	0	1	4	5	Hunter success rate

One did not answer the question.
One did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

6. If necessary, what factors would encourage you to become part of a multi-cooperator Block Management Area with your neighbors? (Please rank the top 4 factors from 1 to 4 with 1 being the most important)

Number who Ranked				
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
5	9	10	8	Increased patrols by FWP personnel
26	9	4	3	Payment system that encourages blocking of lands
8	7	13	4	Uniform maps and ranch rules for all the enrolled ranches
5	13	6	9	Increased hunter management by FWP (the department issues permission slips, reservations made through an answering service, etc.)
7	10	6	12	Cooperative game management goals developed with FWP and my neighbors
2	0	1	2	Other

One did not answer the question.
One did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

7. If necessary, what factors would encourage you to limit the number of hunters on your land? (Please rank the top 4 factors from 1 to 4 with 1 being the most important)

Number who Ranked				
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
0	2	6	8	Increased patrols by FWP personnel
11	10	7	5	Payment based on something other than hunter days
3	5	7	9	Increased hunter management by FWP (the department issues permission slips, reservations made through an answering service, etc.)
19	14	5	0	Scarcity of game
11	16	5	5	Lack of sufficient room for safe hunting
2	3	9	11	Hunter management tools that allow hunters to self-limit themselves (parking areas with limited parking, roster sheets with limited space, etc.)
0	0	2	0	Other

Two did not answer the question.
One did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

8. If you are not enrolled in the Block Management Program in the next two years how will you manage hunting on your land? (Check all that apply)

14 I will keep my land open to hunting for the general public to use.
19 I will close my land to public hunting.
37 I will let friends hunt on my land.
35 I will let relatives hunt on my land.
10 I will charge a fee to individuals who want to hunt on my land.
7 I will lease my land to outfitters.
7 I will lease my land to a hunting/sportsmen group.
0 I will close my land to all hunting.

One did not answer the question.

Appendix E

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

Landowners Who Have Not Expressed an Interest in the Program

278 Surveys sent
88 Surveys returned

1. Is your land open to hunting now?

83 Yes 4 No (Go to question 2) 1 No answer

If yes, how do you manage hunting? (Check all that apply.)
29 My land is open to hunting for the general public to use.
57 I allow relatives to hunt on my land.
62 I allow friends to hunt on my land.
8 I charge a fee to individuals who want to hunt on my land.
4 I lease my land to outfitters.
1 I lease my land to a hunter/sportsmen group.

If yes, approximately how many acres are available for hunting?
454,664 Private acres?
29,020 State School Trust land acres?
22,220 BLM acres?
30,000 US Forest Service acres?
24,774 Other acres?

2. Why haven't you expressed an interest in enrolling in the Block Management Program? (Please rank the following from 1 to 6 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked						
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	
7	9	6	8	3	4	There will be too many disruptions by hunters.
7	11	7	6	7	1	I cannot control the number of hunters on my land.
7	5	14	2	3	4	I am concerned about the possible damage to my property by hunters.
3	2	3	3	4	4	My land will not be patrolled enough by FWP employees.
5	4	6	6	5	4	Monetary incentives are not enough to compensate for hunter impacts.
9	7	3	6	3	5	I am concerned game will be poorly managed (either too many killed or not enough killed).
0	0	0	2	5	4	Block Management Program is too formal/structured.
0	0	0	1	0	3	I would rather lease to an outfitter.
0	1	0	1	0	1	I rather lease to a sportsmen/hunter group.
0	2	1	0	4	0	I would rather charge a fee to individuals who want to hunt on my land.
7	2	0	3	1	2	Other

8 did not answer the question.
20 did not rank the answers, just put check marks.

3. If the department develops a payment system based on things other than hunter days, what factors do you think payment should be based upon? (Please rank the top 5 factors from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important.)

Number who Ranked					
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
7	9	7	6	7	Amount of land offered for enrollment
11	5	5	7	5	Number of potential hunters
3	2	5	2	3	Access to state and federal land
3	4	7	6	7	Length of season open to hunting
6	3	3	6	3	History of game damage problems
7	11	4	6	4	Type and quality of habitat
7	7	8	7	8	Species available for hunting
1	1	2	2	4	Opportunity to link with other block management areas
1	1	0	0	0	Opportunity to link with other FWP programs
0	1	3	1	2	FWP priorities for habitat
1	0	3	4	1	FWP priorities for wildlife
3	6	4	2	3	Hunter success rate
3	2	0	0	2	Other

17 did not answer question.
9 did not rank answers, just put check marks.